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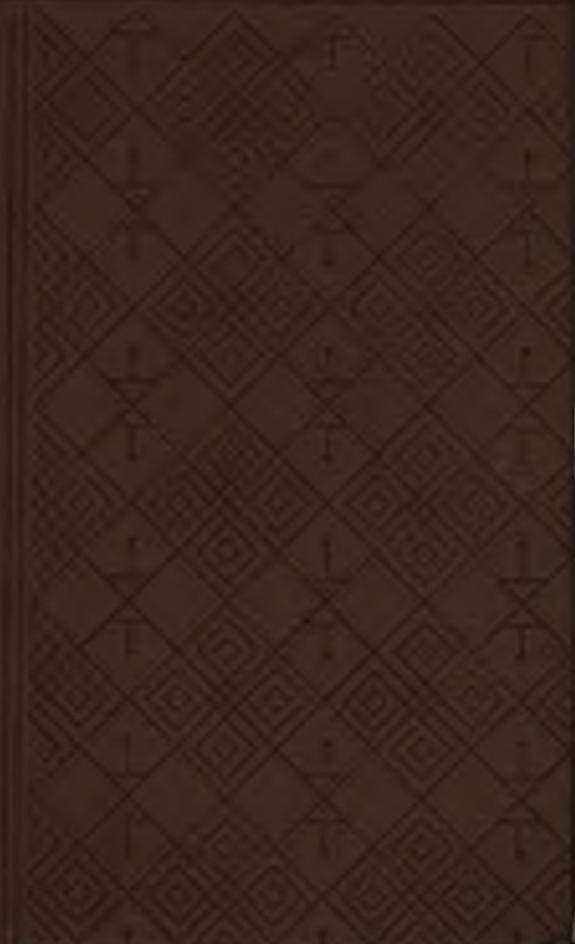
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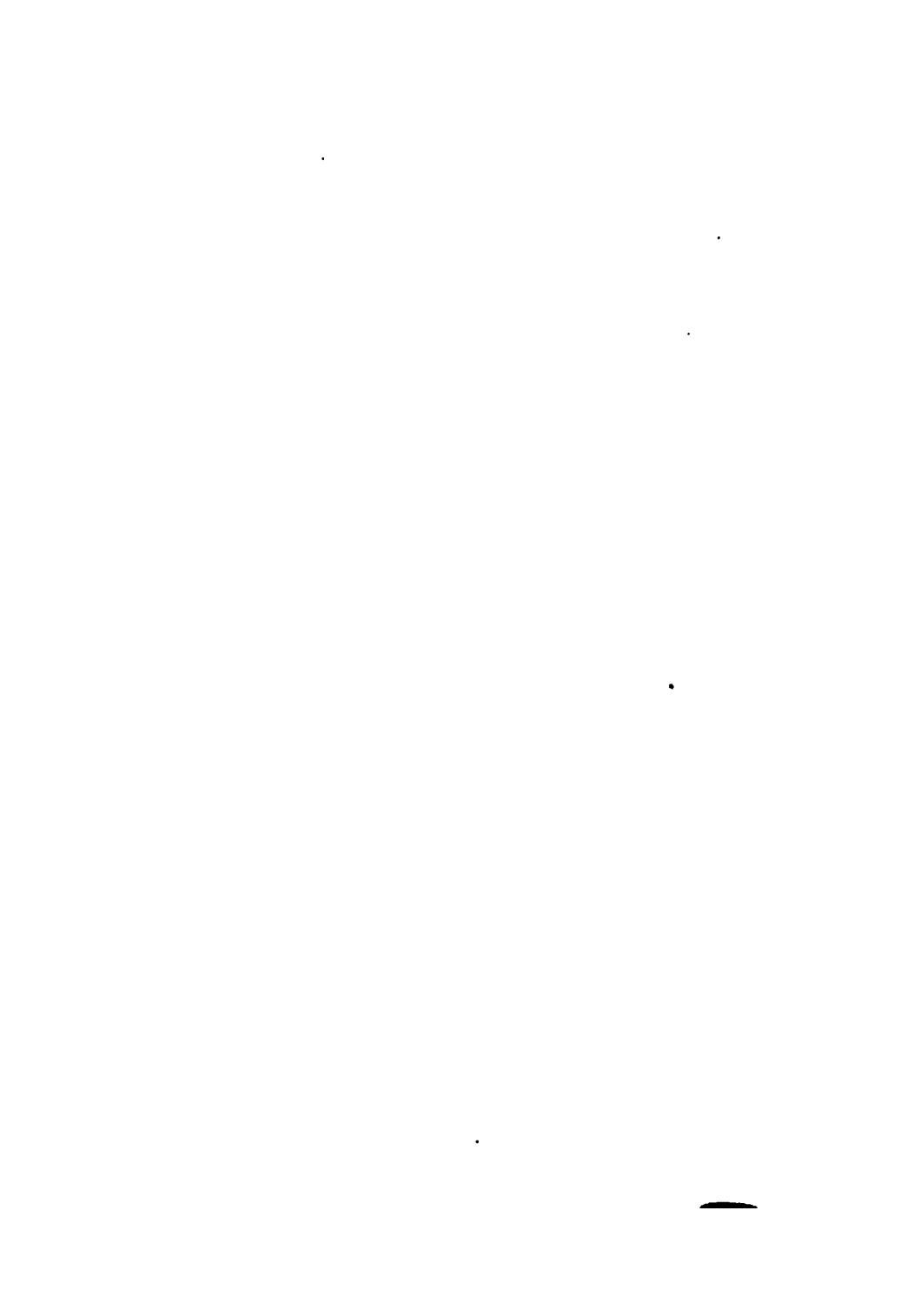
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"I AM QUITE A STRANGER HERE."—p. 45.

*Frontispiece.*

1930.

# TO ST. PETERSBURG

BY

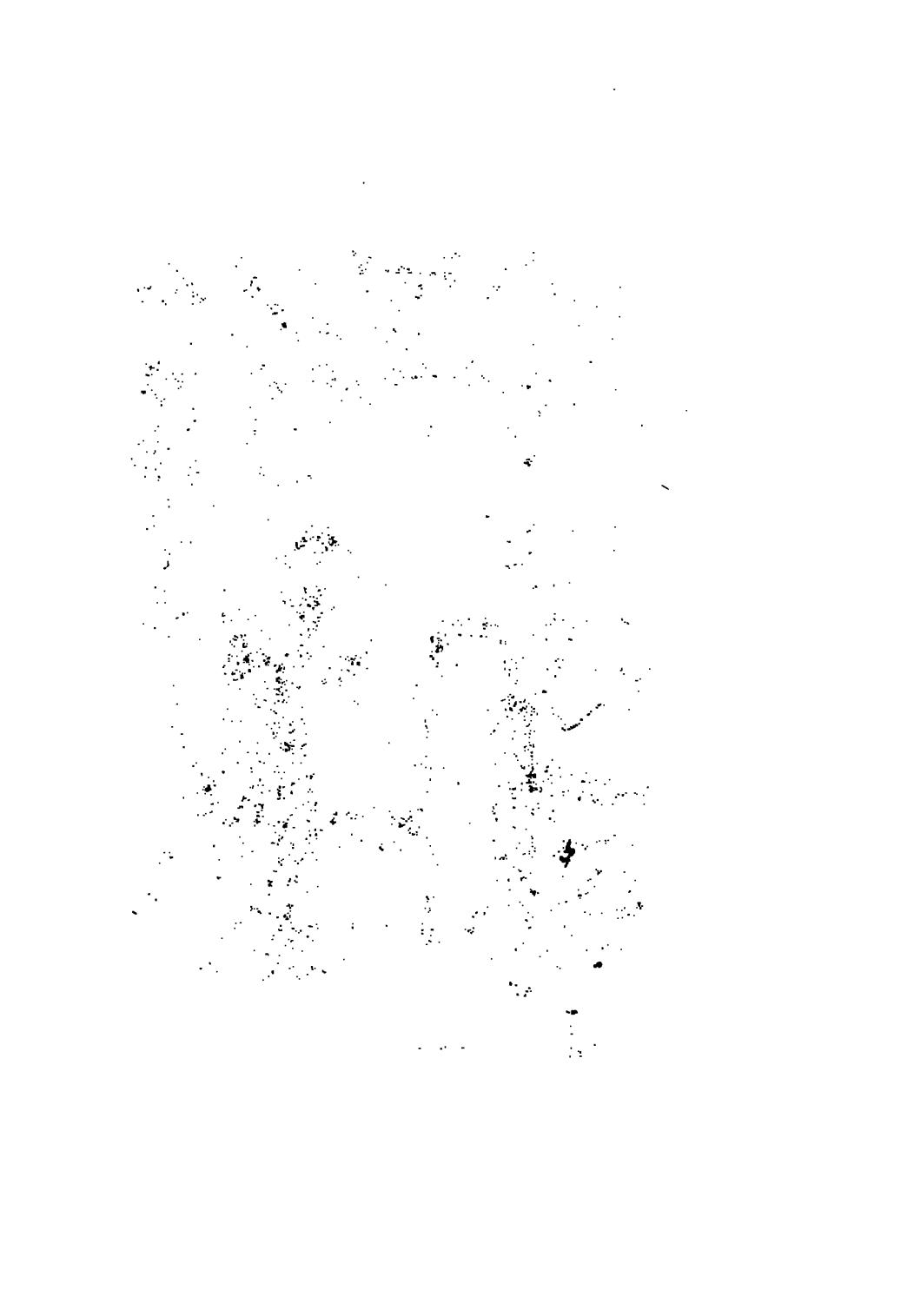
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THE  
HOUSE BY THE WORKS

BY

EDWARD GARRETT

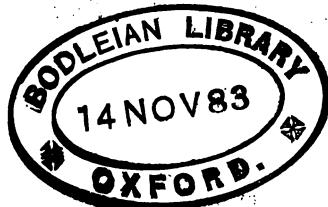
AUTHOR OF "OCCUPATIONS OF A RETIRED LIFE," ETC., ETC.

THIRD EDITION



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TO MY FRIEND,

A. E. R.

WHO KNOWS THAT ALL LOST COINS BEAR

THE KING'S IMAGE,

AND ARE WORTHY TO BE SOUGHT FOR

AND REJOICED OVER

WHEN FOUND.

AGRICULTURE OF

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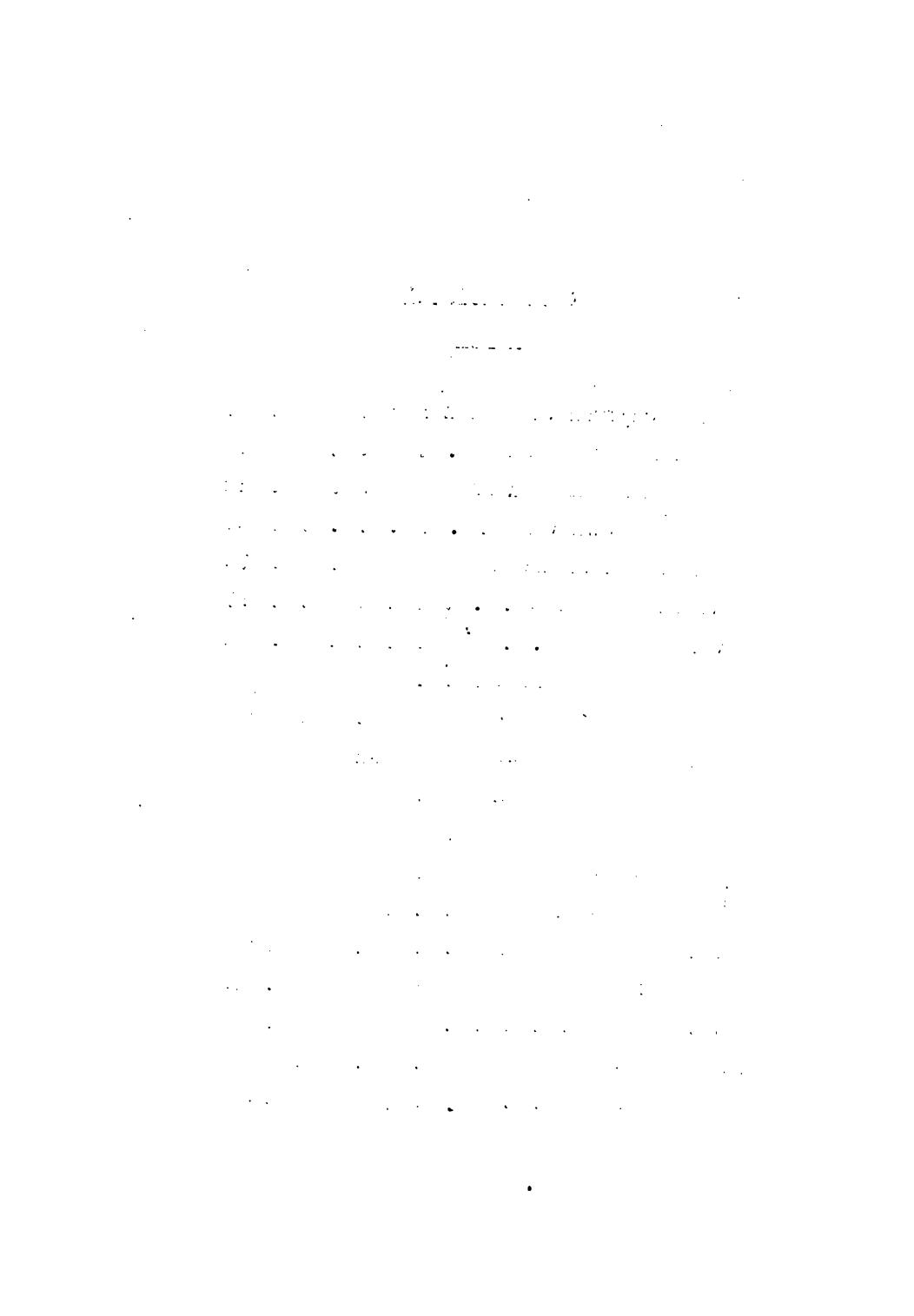
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## THE HOUSE BY THE WORKS.

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“Our life is turned  
Out of her course, wherever man is made  
An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool  
Or implement, a passive thing, employed  
As a brute mean, without acknowledgment  
Of common right, or interest in the end;  
Used or abused as selfishness may prompt.”

WORDSWORTH.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### A CHAPTER WITHOUT A NAME.



STRETCH of sea-shore. In the foreground, is a low sea-wall skirting a gorse-clad height, on the top of which glimmer the white huts of a military encampment. In the front, a little back from the sea, lies a straggling village, whose red roofs only peer above the uneven ground. Farther off is a reach of shingle terraced by the waves, but-

tressed here and there by great black piles, and backed by bare green hills, with a few meagre trees screening the one or two houses which redeem the scene from utter desolation. Farther still, rises the noble spire of a church standing in a town out of sight, except for that faint haze which tells of household work and welfare. Great martello towers stand frowning by the sea; and farther yet, looming but dimly between sea and sky, stretches a headland whose name is written on many a broken heart—a cruel coast, which is strewn with skeleton ships and the relics of drowned men.

Far as the eye can see along that bare shore, there seems to be but one living figure. It is scarcely pleasant to walk leisurely on that rough shingle, but ever and anon this one scrambles on as swiftly as if somebody pursued her. Yet she is in no haste, for at intervals she stands quite still and gazes out upon the sea.

It is a lovely spring morning. There were wild wind and rain last night, so that there is something plaintive in the brightness of to-day, like the look of a kind man when he fears that he has been angry over-much. But

the eyes that gaze out on the great light over the sea take no note of sunshine, except to feel that it mocks a heart whence sunshine has gone out.

On and on she goes ; and she throws up her arms and cries out aloud where there are none to hear her, and the pitiful waves muffle her voice.

The edge of her dress is torn and jagged on the shingle ; the sea-breeze catches the rim of her hat and bends it ; she heeds neither. What can such things matter to her any more ?

She stretches out her left hand, and the sunshine flashes over something on the third finger. She kisses it once, twice, thrice, and then she snatches the gleam from her hand, and holds it high above her head and hurls it from her, and it drops, glittering, into the great waves of the ebbing tide. Then, as the big wave retreats, she springs forward and eagerly scans the wet sand. Ah ! how gladly would she retrieve what she threw away !

Then she turns and looks on the still green hills behind her. How far she is from any human being, and what peace she feels to know it ! She has heard bitter taunts this morning. Why should she risk hearing bitter

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taunts again? Why should she not walk down into those grey waves and be at rest for ever? If anybody saw her, none could be in time to save her; and perhaps the water would never bring her back, and nobody—not one—would ever know what had become of her.

She had had her share of theological teaching, poor thing! She had learned her catechism, not very readily, and her hymns easily enough. She had been taught what catechisms teach of God and heaven and hell; but in her despair she learned something which no catechism had taught.

“Hell!” she cried. “Why need I fear hell? I am in hell already!”

And then she started. She stood close above a huge black pile, from whose farther side the shingle was somewhat hollowed; and in that shelter, and so hidden from her as she came along, two little children had spent the morning at play. They must have heard her voice, for they both jumped up and faced her. They were little creatures of about seven and nine years of age, boy and girl, and they stood hand-in-hand. They looked so bright and pretty that it shocked her, with a revulsion of feeling so intense that its pain seemed

to fill mind and body, to think that they might have heard her dreadful words. But they had not, for they smiled, as if sure that everybody in the world was as pure and as happy as themselves.

“I thought it was mamma,” said the boy, who was the elder.

“Did you think she called you?” asked the stranger.

“I thought so; somebody called; was it you?” the boy replied.

“I was talking to myself,” she answered, dropping down wearily on the pile, and suddenly feeling that her limbs were wrung and aching with the rough walk she had had. The children were neither forward nor shy; they proceeded to gather up the basketful of shells which they had overturned, talking to each other as they did so. The woman sat and watched them, and thought to herself that it would have been a terrible thing if she had fulfilled her wild purpose before their eyes, unwitting of their presence. Their artless sport did not seem to mock her, as did the sunshine and the breeze. She had been a child like them, and they would grow older like her. Like her! Was it possible this

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little girl, the pet of somebody's hearth, the prized plaything of her brother, so sheltered by love that she knew of nothing else, and smiled on every stranger as a new friend, could ever be such a thing as she was? The wild woman knew that it was possible—and she felt that she understood a secret which had often thrilled her with the horror of its unnatural mystery—how it is that mothers sometimes kill their babes! And still she sat beside them; and over and over again her mind repeated, in that mechanical way which strained minds have, “A great gulf fixed—a great gulf fixed!”

Presently the children had again stored all their treasures, and they looked up at her timidly, as if they felt her to be in some sort their guest, to whom they should show hospitality.

“Are you fond of shells? Look!” said the little girl, holding up a pretty pink one so that the sun shone through it.

“Do you understand pebbles?” asked the boy. “Father said that if we had only understood pebbles we might have found some good enough to pay for our holiday.”

“Don’t you live here?” asked the stranger.

“Oh, no ; we live a long, long way off. We came here in a train,” he confided, “and we’re stopping there,” he added, looking back to the town, which from this point showed long lines of grey and dusky red roofs, sloping up the hill-side towards the big church among the trees. “Mother wasn’t well, and the doctor told her to come here.”

“And is she better?” asked the lady.

“Of course she is,” he said. “The doctor said she’d be all right here, so she must be better. I wish we lived here ; there’s nothing to play with out of doors at Perford.”

“Is that the name of your home? And do you not like it?” said the stranger, interested out of herself by the little delicate-faced children, whose pale cheeks the sea-breeze could only touch into a dim shell-pink.

“Oh, I like it!” answered the boy. “Father says that Perford’s the place, after all. Only the water’s all dirty because of the works, and sometimes mother says it smells ; and flowers won’t grow in our garden.”

“And where do you play when you’re at home?” she asked again, strangely unwilling

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to drop the conversation, lest the children should propose to run back to the town.

“In the parlour,” he replied. “Mother won’t let us go into the streets without her, and there aint anywhere else. The garden’s full of blacks, and it’s never dry, because it doesn’t catch the sun. But father takes us to Culstead after chapel on Sunday, and mother says that’s a lovely walk.”

“What happy children you are to be with such kind parents!” she said.

There must have been something in her voice which puzzled the boy, for he said, with childish sympathy, “Haven’t you got a father and mother?”

“No,” she said; “I have had no father or mother for a long time.”

“Grown-up people don’t,” he observed consolingly. “Sometimes little children don’t, and that’s very bad; but mother says, ‘Then God takes care of them, and if there’s brothers and sisters, they must look after each other.’”

The woman sprang up. The boy shaded his eyes with his hand and looked out to sea, thinking she saw a sail; but he could not see anything. Presently she sat down again.

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"Are there any others at home beside you two?" she asked.

"No; just Sue and me. There was a little baby, but he did not come to stay. They all said he never came to stay, but when he went, mother cried just as much as if she thought he had."

"How you and Sue must love each other!" said the lady.

"Of course we do," the lad answered; "and I teach her my games, so that she's nearly as good as a boy." She plays marbles splendid, and aint bad with a kite. Father calls her 'Tomboy.' Mother says I'm to take care of her as long as she wants me, and never to forget that I'm the biggest and strongest."

"And wont you always be very kind to any poor little girls who may have nobody at all to be kind to them?"

"Of course I shall," he answered. "I say, aint it queer? You're not a bit like mother 'cept that you speak as if you were going to cry, when you aint. I often thinks mother's beginning to cry like she did over the baby, but when I look at her, she's laughing. I thought you were beginning just now."

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“What is your mother, like, my dear?” asked the girl, dreamily.

“She’s very nice-looking. She’s got pretty brown hair, very smooth, not all curly, like yours. And she’s got blue eyes, and she is always doing needlework. What was your mamma like?”

“Very like yours, I think. No, I mean she had curly hair like mine, and black eyes like mine, but she was always doing needle-work, and she used to sing, and tell me stories.”

“And didn’t she tell you to be good, too?” asked the boy. “Mother always does. And she says I must be good whether she’s with me to say so or not, and I can’t be always; I forget. But I do tell her when I’ve been naughty,” he added a little wistfully.

“And what does she say then?” asked the stranger.

“She says she is very sorry, but I must begin to try again,” the boy answered. “She always tells Sue and me to be sure to begin again. She says the worst of being naughty is, that it helps us to go on being naughty. And father made a funny verse.”

“Do you remember it?” asked the lady.

“He made me say it over and over again till I knew it,” said the lad.

“If you’ve forgotten to be good and taken up with sinning, Begin again, begin again; all life is but beginning.”

“Begin again, begin again,” lilted little Sue, sitting on the shingle with the shells upon her lap.

“And there’s mother!” shouted the boy, jumping up.

“Where, Will, where?” cried Sue, as if “mother,” familiar as she was, was the most wonderful sight in creation.

“Coming along under the trees o’ the walk. We’ll go and meet her. She won’t want to settle here now, it’s so near dinner time, and it tires her to come over that rough bit,” said Will, with a manly sense of care-taking. “Good-bye, perhaps we’ll meet you down here again.”

“I don’t think that is likely,” answered the stranger, “so good-bye,—and give my love to your mother.”

“You don’t know her,” said serious little Sue.

“But I know you,” the lady replied. “Give me a kiss, little one, and never forget ‘Begin again.’”

And the two children scampered off. The stranger herself sat down in their deserted nook, and leaned her head against the rough old pile, and began to cry. The tears came slowly and gently. The passion had all gone out of her.

It was no longer the sunshine and breeze that mocked her in their brightness and sport. It was she who wronged them by her sin and her despair. And her fellow-creatures were no longer represented by hard faces sneering, and bitter voices taunting her where they had no right to blame, but by a vision of gentle goodness, whose only judgment was "Begin again."

She could not remember one word her own mother had ever said—not one word. She had died so long before. But she could recall the pretty girlish figure, perhaps kept in remembrance by the growing likeness thereto which she saw when she looked in the mirror. And she could remember the patient stitching fingers,—she still had some baby garments which they had made. She had kept them faithfully through her lonely, cold girlhood, often saying to herself that perhaps there would some day be a little baby, who

might wear them on festal occasions in honour of the dead woman whose grandchild it would be. Recollecting that dream, the tears came faster.

She had a more vivid memory of her father, perhaps because his very presence had been an event. She could remember the jolly, laughing man coming in from his voyages, with all sorts of queer things which covered the tables for a day or two, and were then given away to all sorts of people. After her mother was dead, he took longer voyages. He thought his little one was quite safe and happy with the widow of a brother captain. The little one always looked bright enough when he came. The little one never told him about sharp words and petty meannesses. The little one knew some sad truths of her father, which the sour woman harshly told her to damp her joy and pride in his coming. The little one knew that her father drank, and went with wicked people, and wasted his money—poor father! the only being who ever kissed her, or dandled her, or planned treats for her! And when at last the captain sailed away, and his ship was reported as lost with all hands, the sour

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woman said it was all for the best, and the little one was packed off to an orphan school, carrying from her past experience a strange morality, wherein "good" people were those who were clean and saving, scolding, cruel and self-righteous, and "bad" people were those who drank and squandered, and were merry, kindly and brave.

In the orphan school there was nobody of whom she could ask questions. She was no longer the little one,—but the little Number one hundred. The school-people kept her neat and clean, and were kind to her, rather particularly so, for the irrepressible curly hair preserved her individuality in spite of the uniform, and her hands had habits of clinging, and her lips of kissing, which used to make the rough institution servants say, "Bless her little heart." But her lessons had to stand in her mind, hard and sharp, without any of that sweet mist which individual confidences and explanations engender.

And so it came to pass that she said to herself bitterly that she "supposed" her father was in hell. And then heaven had no attraction for her, and she almost grew to hate the thought of her mother, if she was happy

there without him. Those schoolfellows to whom she felt most attracted, told how good their dead fathers had been, and to sympathise with their praises seemed like disloyalty to her father whom nobody would praise. She could love nobody without telling them about him, and she could tell none of these about him; so, with a heart full of love, she loved nobody.

At sixteen, she was placed in a family, as half nurse, half governess, to the younger children. It was a wealthy household, very sumptuous and very decorous, where virtue had three courses for dinner, and snuggled in broad cloth and satin, and wondered how any one did not starve rather than steal. There she learned loneliness, as she could never have learned it had they left her to her cheerless bedroom or the casual friendliness of the servants. Visitors congratulated the mistress of the house on the expansive charity which made her admit the "strange girl" to her luncheon table, and to some corner seat in the evening drawing-room, and wondered whether such admission might not destroy "the snug family feeling." The lady smiled serenely, and said "she had never found it so, and it gave the poor girl an idea of family life." Yes,

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such an idea of it, and such a passionate longing for it, as one might get for food if it was forever within one's sight and forever withheld.

There has been a history between then and now; and here she is, weeping, sitting on the desolate shingle.

She had cried that she was in hell already, and that nothing worse could be in store for her; and at that moment, innocent children had smiled on her, like angels, and by their artless prattle had led her into the secret of a sorrow they did not understand themselves.

Had her mother felt the shadow of approaching death, as the poor mother, whose anxious warnings they related, apparently did? Had she striven to teach her child lessons its ears were too young to catch, or its mind to retain?

Was it possible, aye, for others as well as for herself—that the sentence of judgment would be only

“Begin again?”

She did not know all that meant. Yet she knew enough; for she knew it meant a future harder even than the past which had been so dreadful to her. Only nothing would be so hard as to fail the prayers of her mother,

if haply she had prayed and laboured as this other mother did.

“I will go to Perford myself,” she said, rising, and drawing herself up with a long breath, like one who shakes himself free from a heavy and disturbed slumber. “I will go straight there to-night. It is full of factories of all sorts, and I shall get some kind of work there. One place will do as well as another for me, so long as I can live in it honestly.”

It was her ignorant version of the Prodigal’s aspiration, “I will arise and go to my Father.”





## CHAPTER II.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

**P**ERFORD RAILWAY STATION was a very miserable place. The Railway Company had thought any attempt at comfort there was quite superfluous. Few Perford people had much comfort at home, therefore they need not expect any abroad. Culstead Station was on another line, and was planned in quite another way; but with that we have nothing to do now. At Perford, there was no waiting room, the only approach to that luxury being a covered shed, with seats running down each side, but with no door at either end. People whose livelihood depends on their health and strength are never supposed to object to draughts; and coughs and rheumatism cannot signify so much to those whom they send to the workhouse as they do

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to those who can carry them to watering places and winter gardens. No porter ever objected to anybody's smoking in any part of Perford Station, and perhaps the tobacco served to disinfect the ancient dirt which choked up every corner, and which no porter dreamed of disturbing. Perford was a terminus, which seemed like an ironical suggestion that nobody would ever stop there unless compelled. There was no refreshment room at Perford Station : there were plenty of public houses outside.

Third-class carriages were out of all proportion on the Perford line, but of course there were a few first-class carriages too. For some Culstead people had to use the Perford line sometimes, as it very much shortened their homeward journey to change to it, from one of the great main lines. Then their carriages met them at the door, and waiting friends sauntered up and down the chill, dingy platform, and wondered how soon the Culstead line would be allied to this, so that they need come no more to "such a wretched hole."

Two such people were waiting at Perford now. They were not so squeamish as most of the Culstead folks, for the elder knew the place quite familiarly, because he made all his

money in Perford, and the younger was a boy of sixteen, an age which does not give particular attention to draughts or dustiness. All the railway officials knew Mr. Pendlebury and his son, for Pendlebury's Works was quite a feature in Perford. They knew the little pony trap, which he used for business purposes, but they were not so familiar with his private carriage, and they went outside, and took admiring survey thereof, appreciating its luxurious elegance after their own fashion, appraising the fur wraps as worth "two or three weeks' wages," and making very free translations of the Latin motto beneath the crest on the door panel.

Mr. Pendlebury was waiting for his sister, and his feelings were mingled. She had been the pet of his boyhood—the trusty confidant of his youth. But Barbara Pendlebury had not lived in England for twenty years. All that time their father had been a doomed invalid, whose one possibility of existence was residence in a warm, southern climate. And all that time the brother and sister had only met for short periods at intervals of two or three years. He had thoroughly enjoyed those holiday visits. The way of life had

not been a more complete change than the tone of thought. But it struck him now to wonder whether Barbara would find her change to his sphere equally pleasant. Mr. Pendlebury was one of those people who can enjoy pleasures separately which could not exist together. He wondered what Barbara would do under many circumstances which readily arose before his mind's eye. And Barbara would have an active part to play: for their father's will had provided for her with no pension, with no legacy, but with an actual partnership in Pendlebury's Works. In all his suffering and exile, the old gentleman had preserved a lively interest in the business which had been the pride of his early life. And Barbara had carried on his correspondence, and helped him with the balance-sheets which came in from time to time. She knew about everything. The father and daughter had been all in all to each other during those twenty years. In a solitude apart from the dusty ways of common commercial morality, the old man had gained a wider and clearer outlook on life. He looked to Barbara to put into practice many theories, with which she had full sym-

pathy, which, indeed, had often originated with her, and which he felt too feeble and too far away to broach himself.

As yet, Mr. Pendlebury knew nothing but that his sister was now his partner. It was a very queer arrangement, he considered, though he did not doubt he should find Barbara docile and reasonable enough. But Barbara had already somewhat startled the Culstead Pendleburys by a movement which she had made quite innocently, but which, like a flying feather, showed the way of the wind. Like many invalids, old Mr. Pendlebury had died quite unexpectedly at last. According to the sanitary rules of the district where he had lived, his daughter knew that he must be buried almost by the time that news of his death could reach England; so she calmly desired that nobody should come to her in her trouble, urging that as it was not only too late to see the dead father, but even to follow him to the grave, such a journey would only be as painful as useless, since she had friendly neighbours who would give her any advice or assistance that she required, and since she intended to join her brother and family as soon as possible.

Mrs. Pendlebury was secretly glad that her husband was spared crossing the Channel in such stormy weather, which would have quite knocked him up, even without the rapid railway journey which must have followed. But she resented Barbara's self-helpfulness. Culstead would think it queer; public opinion would perhaps condemn her husband as negligent. But she consoled herself as well as she could by the strictest attention to the etiquette of mourning. Competent critics stole in to visit her, and pronounced the width of her crape to be correct to an inch, and were interested by her whisper that dear Barbara was a little eccentric, but was the sweetest and most unselfish creature nevertheless.

Mrs. Pendlebury had half wished that her sister-in-law would complete her character for eccentricity by arriving at the hall-door utterly unannounced. Any such startling movement would convince all Culstead that Miss Pendlebury's ways were entirely her own, and that nobody could be held responsible for them. But instead, there came a telegram to the effect that she was leaving the station at Folkestone and would arrive at Perford at a

certain hour. This was a little awkward. Gilbert Pendlebury, the eldest son, had gone off, nobody knew where, after a fashion he had, and probably he would not be home in time to receive his aunt. This distressed his mother. "It would look so undutiful." Gilbert was her favourite son, and she wanted him to stand well with his aunt. "So much depends on first impressions," she said, with a sigh. She never suggested that Peter should take his brother's place, and he had only done so because the carriage overtook him wandering on the edge of Culstead Common, and his father had stopped it and taken him in.

And this was how it happened that Mr. Pendlebury and Peter were walking to and fro on Perford platform. There were two or three other people waiting, and they stood back from the rich manufacturer's path. They knew him, but he did not know them, though they lived on his wages.

When the train came in there were very few people in it. Miss Pendlebury was the only first-class passenger. She was a little trim woman in a long cloak, into whose capacious pockets she had gathered all the sundries which accumulate about one in travelling.

Her brother and nephew had nothing to do but to hand her out. She dropped nothing, and her hands were free to take both of theirs. Her nephew had seen her before, for he had been taken to visit his grandfather once, many years ago. Somehow he thought she looked younger now, yet then her hair was brown, and now it was white—a beautiful silvery white, which waved and shone.

“All this is new to me,” she said, looking about her. Perford station had been built the year after she left England.

“Don’t judge our British railway stations by this,” remarked Mr. Pendlebury. “Wait till you see the Culstead one. Ugh! there is not a waiting-room fit to put you in while I see after your luggage.”

“There is nothing to see after,” she answered. “My packages are all directed to the parcels office, to be called for to-morrow, except one black portmanteau, which I see the porter is bringing towards us.”

“We could have had all your things brought up at once, sister,” said Mr. Pendlebury; “there are plenty of people about who would be glad enough to help in bringing them.”

“They will be equally glad to do it to-morrow,” she answered. “I knew I should not get in till nine o’clock, and by that time man and beast should have left off all labour except works of necessity or love. Are these any of your workpeople?” she whispered, as they approached the little group passing the ticket porter.

“Very likely: I think I know their faces,” said Mr. Pendlebury, rather hastily.

“Did you know that girl who stopped behind to make some inquiry?” Miss Pendlebury asked again, as she trotted after her brother down the dingy staircase. “She has travelled nearly as far as I have on this side of the Channel. I noticed her get into the train at some place we reached very soon after we left Folkestone. There is something rather striking about her. Seeing a face like that seems to me like peeping into an interesting book one has not time to read.”

“I think the novelty of English faces gives them interest in your eyes, sister,” said Mr. Pendlebury. “That was a new face, but the type is common enough here. I suspect she is some poor thing who has lost her character,

and has come here in hopes of getting work without one."

"And will she have a chance?" asked Miss Barbara.

"She may or she may not," said Mr. Pendlebury; "the other women don't make it very easy for that class. They soon find out why they have come down in the world, and they resent them getting into their work. It is not a question of morality, for they are indulgent enough among themselves. She may be seen in some of the factories for a day or two; but they'll soon make her tired of that, and then she'll be lost sight of again. In fact, such never come to any good, Barbara."

"I wonder if the poor thing has anywhere to go for to-night? Nobody was waiting for her," said Miss Pendlebury, with a sigh. For she had thought the face very sweet and earnest, though she had not been oblivious to that curious something about the lonely girl's air and dress on which the manufacturer had founded his shrewd remarks. If she could have believed that the stranger had a safe place to shelter in and honest hearts to counsel her, Miss Pendlebury felt that she could better have enjoyed her brother's luxu-

rious carriage and the restfulness of her kins-folks' presence. But Mr. Pendlebury felt no thorn in his cushion ; yet his sister thought he looked careful and perplexed. In fact, with all his forecasting, he had not looked forward to meeting Barbara like this. She ought to have been crying. She ought to have been speaking of her dear dead parent. He could not guess that she resolutely shut back her tears lest they might trouble these who could not enter into the full pang of her loss. Nor could he imagine that it was her enthusiastic devotion to her father's wishes and plans which prompted her quick interest in Perford and all appertaining to it.

“Perford is indeed changed,” she said again, as the carriage drove off. “What part is this? I do not know it at all.”

“Oh yes, you do,” her brother answered, “this is a vestige of an old district. This is Windmill Street.”

“Why, that is where old nurse went to live when she left us!” she exclaimed ; “but it was a pleasant old street, with little front gardens, and green palings round them. There was a lovely laburnum in front of her window.”

“I daresay that made a little firewood.

years ago," said Mr. Pendlebury drily. " The very lowest of the factory people live here now, because the houses are old and ruinous. They pay pretty high rents though, for no other place will take them, and they must go somewhere. There are two families, at least, in each of these houses, besides odds and ends of single lodgers. I dare say these houses bring in at least twice as much rent as old nurse paid thirty years ago. The value of property hereabouts is double what it used to be."

Miss Pendlebury said nothing, but bent forward to gaze upon the dismal scene. Much was uncertain in the darkness, for lighting did not seem to have improved in proportion to the population and property-value of Perford. She could discern the tumble-down little houses, with dim candles burning behind make-shift blinds hung awry. Once, a gin-palace threw a broad stream of light across the road, illuminating the carriage as it drove by, and revealing a little iron church, planted on a patch of stony ground hard by. Proper foot-paths there were none, and here and there the old raised foot-way was trodden quite level with the road.

The High Street was brighter. It boasted several gin-palaces, and two or three showy tobacconists' shops, and a foreign confectioner's. A dark-looking drapery shop was still open, as well as two or three dingy general shops, with pictorial advertisements of the *Police News* decorating their fronts. There were one or two large shops already closed. Perford Church abutted on the High Street, and the churchyard, with its avenue and flowery graves, had been a pretty sight in Miss Pendlebury's early days. In the darkness, she could not see the changes here, though she missed the avenue, which had been cut off from the high-road by the erection of a public mortuary.

But, by the corner of the churchyard, Miss Pendlebury recognised the first token that this was really the Perford of her early remembrances. This landmark was a wide, old-fashioned baker's shop, with small heavily-framed panes in its windows, and a great bowl of flowers set behind its loaves and flour-bags. There were one or two people in the shop ; but the carriage drove on too rapidly for Miss Pendlebury to catch a good sight of them, or to read the name above the door.

"So the Enticknapp's house still belongs to a baker," she said.

"In fact, the Enticknapp's are still there," answered Mr. Pendlebury. "The old man died long ago, but the widow keeps on the business, though she must be pretty well off. But some people are greedy of gain."

Miss Pendlebury leaned back in the carriage. She did not look out again, till they had cleared the squalid by-ways, resonant with discordant voices wrangling in the front yards. Presently they drove along the broad smooth road which skirted Culstead Common, and in about a quarter of an hour she saw lamps burning before pleasant houses. Then Miss Pendlebury looked out again, and saw stained-glass hall-doors, illuminated from within, brilliantly lit family rooms with elegant shadows on the blinds, soft lights high up, keeping company with dozing children in snug nurseries. Here and there curtains were left undrawn, revealing rich gilding and bright glass. Miss Pendlebury wondered if the owners had a sentimental idea that they would show their home-light to some wayfarer? Is it a kindness or a mockery? she thought.

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“ You see, if Perford is not improved, Culstead is,” observed Mr. Pendlebury. “ The estate has been very carefully managed, so that the increase of building shall not detract from its natural beauty. No houses of a meaner sort are possible under the terms of the building leases which are granted.”

“ Here we are !” cried Peter, springing up, as the carriage stopped. The hall door did not fly open before he rang the bell, and then it was opened by a very genteel maid-servant with an impassible face. The family stood back in the hall—Mrs. Pendlebury, her two daughters, and her son Gilbert, who, to his mother’s great joy, had arrived home in the nick of time.

“ My darling Barbara !” said the matron gushingly, politely kissing her sister-in-law on both cheeks, as she regularly kissed all the favourite enemies on her visiting list.

“ Dear, dear, and all the children are quite grown up !” said Aunt Barbara, turning about from one to another, and finally putting her two hands fondly on Peter’s shoulders ; “ and now that I see you in the light, my boy, you are the very image of what your father was.

when he and I used to go nutting in Culstead. I suppose you have left off that?" she said to her brother.

"Ah, I'm too old and busy now," he said.

"But I'm not," she rejoined; "so I'll go with Peter as your representative."

"I know all the good finds, aunt," said the boy. "But the girls will never come."

"Then we'll go without them," said Aunt Barbara.

Mrs. Pendlebury said to herself that her sister-in-law was very strange. She thought, like her husband, that, coming home after a death, it would have been proper to walk in solemnly, and sigh, and speak in whispers. What would the servant think to hear her talking of nutting? But certainly it would carry out the rumour of eccentricity which she herself had set on foot.

"I will go with you to your room, dear Barbara," she said in tones of portentous sympathy. Mrs. Pendlebury had never known a grief which had touched her to the quick, and therefore she knew nothing of the cheerfulness and strength which come to us when we are quite beyond the consolations of the undertaker and the mourning warehouse.

"Ah, my dear sister," she sighed, sinking into an easy-chair beside the curtained bedroom window, "we have had a great loss, and it must have been a terrible blow to you."

"Yes, it is," said Barbara Pendlebury, very quietly; "but my father felt it to be his great gain. Life had grown very painful to him of late, and he used to say, 'Whenever it is God's will, Barbara, I am, oh, so ready!' He told me to give his love to all of you, and to give each of your children whatever they will choose themselves as a little personal reminiscence of him, quite apart from their legacies. He told me all this long before he died, in case he had no time for last words, as he had not."

Mrs. Pendlebury sat in silence. She knew no precedent for this course of conduct, although she had in her jewel-case about ten mourning rings which she never wore, in remembrance of as many relatives whom she had nearly forgotten. She could not help wondering what her children would select, and she was glad to have this timely hint, that she might give them the benefit of her counsel. The darlings must have something which should really please them, as their dear grandpapa had in-

tended ; but at the same time she must take care that there was a sobriety and fitness about their choice, lest this queer aunt should remember it to their disadvantage.

“ My dear Barbara,” she said, with a sudden change of subject, which she thought fully justified by the gravity of its occasion, “ how very white your hair is grown ! I have not one grey hair visible, and I have really—well, you understand—not done very much to it. We must look after you, Barbara. You have no right to be an old woman for a long time yet, my dear.”

Aunt Barbara laughed. “ I can neither be older or younger than I am,” she said ; “ and the sort of affection which suits me nowadays will not be repelled by white hair and a cap.”

Mrs. Pendlebury looked grave. What did she mean about affection ? “ Ah, you are such a sensible woman, Barbara,” she answered. “ Many simpletons of your age would be still thinking of marrying—as you certainly might have done long ago, my dear, but for your filial devotion. But ah, my dear, marriage—even the happiest marriage—has its trials ! As I said to your brother the other

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day, ‘ Among us, dear Barbara will find all the warmth and kindness of family life, without its cares and anxieties.’ ”

“ But half the worth of any life is in its cares and anxieties,” said Aunt Barbara; “ and my attendance on my father had nothing to do with my single life. When I left England with him twenty years ago, I knew I should never marry.”

Mrs. Pendlebury felt something in her sister-in-law’s manner which forbade any question, now or ever, on this subject. She had no romantic womanly longing for a love-story; but it puzzled her to know what this could be, for no whisper of any love-making had hung about Barbara’s youth. She could recall Barbara as a romping girl, and then as a merry maiden, full of energy and playfulness. She had sobered a little before she went abroad, but only as much as might have been accounted for by her father’s failing health and her consequent increase of responsibility. In Mrs. Pendlebury’s remembrance of those days there was no other figure which could pair with Barbara’s. “ But she will tell the girls all about it some day,” she decided. “ Old maids can seldom resist making beacons of their broken hearts.”

Supper was waiting in the well-appointed dining-room. It would have cheered Aunt Barbara's loneliness to have seen some of the old Worcester china and half-worn silver, which would have awakened mutual memories of the past. But Mrs. Pendlebury and her daughters had been hospitable after their own fashion. They had caused the newest service to be set out, and the elegant épergne. They could not think of treating Aunt Barbara with less consideration than they showed to those acquaintances whom they delighted to dazzle and outvie. With a sick heart-sinking, Aunt Barbara felt as if she was a stranger among strangers.

“How did Paris look when you came through it, aunt?” asked Fanny, the eldest girl. “I love Paris. I would go and live there tomorrow if I could.”

“It looked bright and gay, as usual,” answered Miss Pendlebury. “But I am not very fond of Paris. I am always haunted by the thought of the thousands of people who have struggled so terribly in the revolutions there, craving they scarcely knew what, and perishing in a miserable sense of failure.”

“Ah, poor Marie Antoinette!” sighed

Emma. "I never tire of reading about her sorrows. Fanny gets bored, which I cannot understand, for the story is so beautiful, though so sad."

"It is sad enough, indeed," said Miss Pendlebury, "but I believe I think more of the thousands upon thousands of poor women who were born to infinitely greater hardships than she ever endured for a day, and who sinned and suffered so terribly in their wild efforts to clear a brighter path for the generation coming after them."

"Why, you do not mean to say you have any feeling for those awful wretches who rushed into the palace, and who took their knitting to watch for the tumbrils?" cried Fanny. "Horrid low creatures!"

"They ought to have been all drowned in the Seine," said Gilbert; "and I expect a great many of them met that fate, among the fluctuations of public opinion."

"A great many ended in the mad-houses. But I do have feeling for them," said Aunt Barbara. "Does not Solomon say that 'Oppression driveth a wise man mad?' Therefore what effect was it likely to have on those whom it had kept so ignorant and degraded

that their only idea of justice was revenge ? Probably you have read all about the horrors of the French revolutions without reading of the horrible state of society which brought them forth ? ”

But Mr. Pendlebury interrupted, protesting that his children would have their aunt with them long enough without wearying her with arguments on the night of her arrival. She was to take her supper, go off to bed, and get rest after her travellings and weariness.

When she was left to herself for the night, Barbara Pendlebury surveyed her chamber with interest. It was full of luxuries and conveniences new to one so long accustomed to Pyrenean simplicity. The foot fell softly and silently on the thick carpet. The toilet table was set out with bits of dainty china, of whose very use Barbara was ignorant, knowing no cosmetic but cold water. She had a choice of chairs easy enough to entice her from bed itself. Everything on all sides reminded her that she was in a rich man’s house. Aunt Barbara sighed. She did not feel quite at home ;—amid all the hospitality and luxury she missed something. She was in an atmo-

sphere friendly to her, yet antagonistic to her real self. Her courage almost failed her, and then she smiled to recall how, in her young days, she had envied those who had braved even disgrace and death for what they deemed the right. Yet she remembered also, that even then, she had felt that those persecutors who spoke mildly and wept over the pains they were inflicting, must have been the hardest to encounter and resist.

“And while I am mourning over fancied woes, and astonished that all life is not levelled to my feet,” she said to herself, “I wonder what has become of that poor young thing who travelled with me from the coast? I wonder often whether we ought to make some excuse to speak to strangers to whom we feel strongly drawn—about whom we feel an impression that they are in straits and quick-sands; I think we should. I wish I had contrived to speak to that girl to-night. I believe my brother would say it was Quixotic. Well, never mind. Better tilt at a few windmills than leave one monster unchallenged. But I did not do it this time, nevertheless. I must pray to God that somebody else may do whatever I left undone. But I shall not have

any right even to that prayer unless I try to do my duty whenever I see it. And, oh! to how much duty are we all blind and deaf! But at least we may honestly pray that God will lighten our eyes and open our ears, and I believe a sincere soul was never left with that prayer unanswered."

Said Mrs. Pendlebury to her husband before they went to sleep that night, "I am afraid I was right in my intuition that poor dear Barbara is rather peculiar. Did you notice how ready she was to argue with the children at supper, and what a strange line she took? And, oh dear! do you observe that actually your sister has no crape on her dress?"





## CHAPTER III.

### THE HEART OF A STRANGER.

**D**OES anybody know what it is to feel absolutely alone?—unable to foresee where one is going, with nobody to expect one, and with nobody to whom one must report oneself? It is a dismal experience, which most of us can only partially appreciate; and the saddest part of it is, that the few who are called upon to understand it are generally those least fitted for it,—not the virtuous and heroic, who, however they might suffer, might be upheld by their inner consciousness of rectitude and of unity with the strength of the universe,—but the weak and wavering, whose very unwariness in losing their place in life augurs ill for their success in finding another.

The girl who had wandered by the sea-shore stood doubtfully at the gate of Perford railway

station. The porter had answered her inquiries by saying that there were lodging places in the High Street. She peered into the darkness and trembled. She began to wish she had not formed such a sudden and untimely resolution. She might have waited a day or two, and made some sort of arrangements. She said to herself that such rashness was just like her—alas ! just like her ! She was no philosopher, poor thing, and could not reflect that if we have been rash to do evil, it may be well if we can be rash in our attempts to be good,—that the deadly danger is when all the forces of our nature run downward. It might have been well if she could have guarded against the strange terrors that seemed crowding about her as she stood in the dismal street. But she could only have done so by exposing her new-born determination to an atmosphere as deadly to such resolutions as black frost to a bud. She did not know that. If she had gone back to her familiar haunts she would have fancied herself free to leave them whenever she wished, only the wish to do so would gradually have died away. No fetter is so binding as paralysis. Now she was terrified with an awful terror

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which no innocent girl could have known. And in that terror lay her safety.

She was not less scared when she reached the High Street, though it was lighter and more cheerful. Her knowledge of the world was of its black side, so that she shrank from risks which many a guileless woman would have encountered fearlessly. She could not feel indignant, but only utterly wretched, when she heard herself rudely misunderstood by the hangers-on at the tavern. Little angels had indeed opened the door of her hell, but only to reveal its horrors and the devils who were goading her soul. "O God!" she cried, "if I am to be good, let me see a little goodness."

There was no help to be got from the gaudy young women who were flirting behind the tobacconists' counters, and there would be even less safety in seeking advice within the swinging doors of the public-houses. Suddenly she caught sight of the baker's shop beside the church. By this time a boy was rapidly putting up its shutters. But in the little oak desk-closet at the back of the shop, stood a young woman, not very much older than herself. Here was somebody re-

spectable, who might be also kind, or whose mere indifference was not likely to be evil-thinking or suspicious. The poor wayfarer hastened in. Coming from the night air of spring, and chill as she was with weariness and fear, the warmth of the shop folded gratefully round her. Through the old fashioned, green blinds of the parlour behind it, she could see a white-capped old lady seated at needle-work. The maiden stepped from the desk, and stood before the stranger. She looked so tall, and strong, and kind, that the worn-out wanderer longed to throw herself on her neck like a tired child, and bid her do with her what she would. But that could not be. She could only timidly explain.

“I have troubled you to ask if you can recommend me where to find a lodging for to-night? I am quite a stranger here. Any quiet, safe place which will take me will suit me, and I shall thank you very much.”

The clear, blue eyes of the maiden she addressed, looked down very pitifully into her great black eyes, as she made this little speech.

“It is a pity it is so late,” the other answered her in a cheerful tone, which seemed

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to her the sweetest music she had ever heard, it carried such assurance of succour. "But we must find some place for you. If you will rest on that chair for a moment, I will go in and consult with my mother."

The girl sat down on the proffered seat, almost overcome by the revulsion of feeling. O surely, surely, this refreshing cup of kindness had never been offered to her lips only to be dashed away! Yet even if so, its mere passing sweetness would give her courage to go on her way again.

She watched the two speaking together in the inner room. She saw the girl put her hand on her mother's shoulder, as if coaxing her, and she saw the mother's upturned face, smiling fondly at her daughter while she seemed to reason with her. She watched and did not envy, as she had once envied the fondling between her pupils and their parents. She had no more share in this love than in that, still she felt that she was the better and safer for it, and that somehow its mere existence stood as a screen between her and the terrible world outside.

Presently mother and daughter came out together. The old lady was not so tall as her

daughter, but she had the same sunshiny face, and she said in a genial tone, which implied no painful doubt—

“Thou art a very young thing to be going about the town for a home at this time of night. Now, the matter is, what dost thee want? If thou do not object to a coffee-house, I can recommend thee to one or two among my customers which I believe are kept as decorously as hired rooms can be kept. But, however decent the landlords may be, they can only regulate their customers’ conduct, and not their characters; and I don’t like sending a young woman to such places. But if thou wilt take a poor, clean room, where thou wilt be waited on by a good old woman, and will be as safe as at thine own mother’s hearth, I think I can find thee such an one.”

“Oh, that is what I should like!” cried the stranger, “if such an one will take me in without any references!” They should know the worst at once; she would drink no more of this wine of kindness until she knew that it would be still extended to such as she was.

The beneficent house-mother’s face grew only kinder, though its smile died away.

for myself, and therefore I must be content to wait."

"Hans has won the appointment," said Lois, glancing over the letter. "That is why he writes. Well, I knew he would get it, but only certainty is certain, after all."

"Thou must hasten on with thy sewing and marking, Lois," observed her mother quietly; "for Hans will be presently meeting with some great success, which he will call thee over to enjoy with him."

Lois came round the table and put her arms about her mother's neck "I wish we might live in England," she said.

"Nay, child," answered Hannah Enticknapp. "From both sides of the house thou comest from those who counted as their home wherever they found their work; and thy work is to be Hans Endberg's wife, and the guide and comfort of his household, be it where it may."

"I have no right to talk of my forefathers," laughed Lois, anxious to put aside the shadow of future separation, "I who am neither Quaker nor Moravian."

"Thou art Lois Enticknapp," said the mother, calmly. "Doth a child need any

name but her own in her Father's house? What is Quaker? A nickname thrown at us by scoffers; though let us be proud of the steadfast purity which has made it a title to be loved and trusted. What is Moravian? A name derived from a place. These things serve their turn among men, but by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free. Thy father and I, we talked it over, and came to the conclusion that by the very heart of the faiths in which we had been reared, there should be no barrier of our erecting between thee and any of God's children. Thy father resolved to bring thee up inside no religious sect, but to teach thee to search always whence most light came to guide thee on thy path of duty. 'God will never leave the world without His Witness,' said thy father, 'but He may withdraw it from any church; and if we have taught her to look for it there, there she may remain after it has departed. If Lois is good,' said he, 'the good of all our ways will cleave to her and descend through her, just as she will keep the household treasures we shall bequeath to her, though I

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hope she will destroy the rags and rubbish. 'But, Jacob,' said I then, 'there are no rags and rubbish in a well-ordered house.' 'Nay, Hannah,' said he, 'but there are some things which will wear out speedily.'

"I have sent two nice rolls to Mr. Moffat's," said Lois, putting her lover's letter into her pocket, and cheerfully returning to the little affairs of common life. "I wonder how that poor girl is to-day. I promised to go and see her as early as I can."

"Thou mightest have asked her to come here, Lois," observed the mother.

"Oh, she is such a poor, bruised soul," said Lois, pitifully. "She seems to me like a little hurt animal; and you know, mother, such a one will not come when you call, but you must go to it and pick it up."

Hannah Enticknapp gently shook her head. Had the strange girl been a wild and loathsome outcast, such as good women of her own persuasion had found in gaols and poor-houses and had taught and clothed and restored to their right mind, Hannah Enticknapp would not have shaken her head. But she had noticed the graceful dress, the sensitive face, and the educated accent of the wanderer of the

night before. She was sufficiently attracted herself to feel quite sure that a natural attraction mingled with her Lois's impulse towards good works. She had no fear for Lois; she could trust her as she might trust herself. But she did not like to think of her making friends with such as this girl might be. She was not quite sure that Lois would always stoop—as men suppose that angels stoop—over the sinner. She had a lurking conviction that her daughter would sit down at the sinner's side, or take her hand, and keep step with her on the upward path. And from one or two experiences in her own life, Hannah Enticknapp knew what that means, and how it wears the youth out of one's eyes and the bloom off one's cheek.

"This girl is so near thine own age, and has so much about her that makes her fit for thine equal friend, that I doubt if I do well to leave her to thy charge, Lois," said the mother.

"That is just why you should leave her to me!" said Lois. "She will feel that I have no right to be angry with her, if she has done wrong, but that I am bound to help her and comfort her, as I should like to be helped and comforted myself."

“Lois, thou dost not know the evil which is in the world,” said the mother, almost severely.

“Mother!” Lois exclaimed in utter astonishment, “have I not gone with Else to visit sick folks in the houses in Back Lane? and have I not seen there the poor little ones who know no father, and their miserable mothers; and when I have seen them pass the shop at night, smartly dressed and painted, do you think I have not known what that means, mother? The Bible tells us what the world is, and you have never tried to blind my eyes, my mother.”

“And dost thou think that these poor women of whom thou speakest, and to whom thou hast spoken, have told thee all the truth, Lois?” asked her mother. “Nay, child, they cannot make their rooms fair for thee to enter, but thou knowest how they dust this and hide that. And so do they with the story of their lives. They show thee but the outside of the cup and platter; and though they canst not fail to see there the crack and the stain, yet thou canst not guess the awfulness and misery within. Thou knowest of vice, my child, as they know of sickness who read of

it in books, and who walk through a hospital at noon on a gala-day."

Lois stood thoughtful, with a curious strength and resolution growing in her face. But the last metaphor set free her thoughts. "Mother," she said, with a strong light kindling in her blue eyes—"mother, sickness was never cured by those who only read of it in books, and see it on holidays; and sickness is the best type of sin. And if those poor women cannot show me the truth about themselves, then they will be never the better till they meet somebody to whom they can show it. And if this girl is likely to do so to me, then I am the one to go to her."

"Ah, Lois," said her mother, "many an one has tended the sick till he has died himself, not perhaps of the same disease, but of weariness and heart-failing."

"You do not think me worthy of the work I would undertake," said Lois with a sigh, "just as we do not let babies and weak people be nurses and doctors. We don't hinder the grown up and the strong, for we know that if they do die at such a work they cannot do better, and that they will not have given their lives for naught. But then neither

can I be fit to become Hans Endberg's wife and a house-mother, who should be ready at all times for everything, or who else can be so?"

There was silence. Hannah Enticknapp poured the tea into the heavy blue and white cups. Presently Lois spoke again.

"Mother, I have heard you blame Hans Egede's mother-in-law for dissuading his daughter from his Greenland mission. Now that we have seen how happy Gertrude Egede was in it, we see how wrong the mother was. But at the time she did it she must have thought only of the white bears and the treacherous natives, and the frost and the horrible food. It was no wonder the mother held back her daughter."

"Thou sayest well that we may blame our own censure," said the Quakeress, and sighed.

"Still, she was wrong after all," observed Lois, sweetly. "But I do always hope that the heart of Mary, the mother of Jesus, had consented wholly to His ways, or He must have felt almost that He needed to ask her pardon for being crucified before her eyes."

There was another silence. Then Hannah Enticknapp said—

"Thou shalt go to the stranger thyself, child. God did not give thee to me to keep for myself. He only lends us our children; He does not give them to us till we return them to Him."

"I don't wonder you can scarcely trust me, mother," said Lois, gaily. "If it was any great work, you would do well to hold me back; but this is such a little thing—nothing at all!"

But Lois resolved that all her accustomed duties must be done before she paid her visit, and that they must be done with extra thoroughness. All the windows in the house must be set open to carry off the smell of the bakery. The simplicity of Paul and Hannah Enticknapp's Moravian and Quaker training had made it easy for them to keep life wholesome in working conditions. No covering of any kind had ever been put down on the deal stairs; but Else's scouring kept them so pure that, as the English journeyman said, "one might eat one's dinner off them." There was not one nailed-down carpet or stuffy moreen curtain in the house. Else called them "dirt traps," and shook out the squares of plain felt, and washed the pretty dimities oftener than even Lois thought necessary.

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So Lois made her daily tour of the house, throwing up the windows, picking off stray pins and shreds, putting fresh water to the gathered flowers, helping Else with the beds, and peeping into the kitchen stores, taking counsel with her as to what needed replenishing. But all was done soon after ten o'clock, and Lois was free to wend her way to Church Lane.

"I hope I have not been wilful," she thought to herself. "Perhaps I have out-argued mother without being in the right. One needs to be a little frightened when one gets one's own way."





## CHAPTER V.

### MUTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS.

**W**HEN Barbara Pendlebury came downstairs on the morning after her arrival, the moral atmosphere of the breakfast-room was not altogether genial. Mrs. Pendlebury had nearly exhausted her nerve power in the effort of inducing her darling Gilbert to appear punctually at the morning meal, instead of sauntering in as was his wont, and calling for fresh relays of tea and toast when everybody had finished. Her exertions had not sweetened her temper to encounter Fanny's opposition to her wish that the remembrance to be selected by her daughters should take the form of pearl-set onyx lockets, sober enough for mourning, but not unsuited for gayer wear, and likely to meet the Quaker-like tastes which she assigned to her sister-in-law.

But Fanny set her heart on a diamond ring, and spoke undutifully ; and Emma wished for a cross, which her mother felt certain Aunt Barbara would condemn as popish. Nor had she yet been able to advise Gilbert, but she felt sure he would ask for time to consider, and that would give a chance for her counsels.

“ How beautiful everything outside looks this morning ! ” said Aunt Barbara as she took her seat. “ It is so strange to see again the places of which I have only dreamed for the last twenty years. Is it not odd that our dreams do not seem able to shift their scenery ? Friends whom I have first met among the Pyrenees, in my sleep have always walked with me, not over our southern plains, but across Culstead Common. I have heard other people say the same. A well-known public man once told me that all his American admirers and aristocratic English friends appeared in his dreams grouped in the poor little cottage where he was born and brought up. I wonder how far the rule holds ? I wonder if a foundling, for instance, knowing nothing of the history of his first two or three years of existence, dreams in later life of surroundings which his waking memory cannot

recall? That would be a strange testimony to the value of early impressions."

"It is hard to find out these things," said Mr. Pendlebury. "They don't lie in anybody's way of business. They don't lead to any practical end."

"Oh, I think these things are most practical," his sister rejoined. "I think the study of character, and of the forces building it up, is the most practical of all studies, and it includes a great many."

"Ah, my dear Barbara," said Mrs. Pendlebury, "after all, it is not for us to pry into mysteries. We must accept the world as we find it. And I am sure it is hard enough to deal with it so."

"So hard, that I feel we must turn to the mysteries to make it easier," answered Aunt Barbara. "I think it may be in the body politic as in the body physical—a little knowledge of physiology may save a deal of tiresome quackery."

"The dear children have been forming all sorts of plans for you, sister," said Mrs. Pendlebury, resolved to keep the conversation in her own grasp. "They have even been looking out for such a house as might suit you."

“And isn’t it jolly to think that Park House is to be let just now,” said Fanny in a loud voice, which instantly silenced her mother. “I set my heart on pa going into it when the Prides first left it, but he made belief he could not afford it. A glorious place! splendid rooms for dancing!”

“I think my dancing days are over, Fanny,” said Aunt Barbara, quietly. But there was that in her tone which made the family feel, for the first time, that there was something not entirely admirable in the utter selfishness which had dictated Fanny’s advice.

“I dare say Barbara would prefer that old-fashioned house in East Culstead,” said Mr. Pendlebury. “I mean the long, low house with the cedars in the garden. I think they call it the White Lodge.”

Fanny gave an impatient gesture. “There is no peace in that house for the singing in the Independent chapel,” she said. “And nobody lives in East Culstead.”

“What is called East Culstead?” asked Miss Pendlebury. “For these divisions were unknown in my day.”

“The eastern side of the common is called East Culstead,” answered Mr. Pendlebury.

“The houses are new, except the White Lodge and about three others.”

“It is the place where we do our shopping,” said Fanny. “They have built first-class shops there—almost as good as London shops, except for the name of the thing.”

“Don’t you deal with the Perford shops?” said the aunt.

The girls shrieked with affected dismay. Mrs. Pendlebury explained that there was not a decent article to be had in Perford.

“And who would go there if there were?” asked Fanny in her saucy way.

“Nobody wants to see Perford nearer than from the ridge on the common,” said Gilbert. “There ‘distance lends enchantment to the view,’ and the chimneys and the cloud of smoke serve to finish off the picture.”

“Do you attend business at the works, Gilbert?” asked his aunt. The question touched a sore point. Mr. Pendlebury wished his son to succeed him, but Gilbert desired to enter the army, and his mother seconded him. Between the divided ambitions, the young man was doing nothing regularly, though he was twenty-two years of age. He muttered in reply that he went sometimes. And there

was an awkward pause. To relieve the embarrassment, Aunt Barbara inquired, "And is this part of Culstead distinguished by any adjective?"

"No," said Mr. Pendlebury; "we consider it Culstead proper, by virtue of the Manor House and its many other old mansions; but it is sometimes called Old Culstead, and the church is always known as Old Culstead Church, to distinguish it from St. Andrew's Church, built about ten years ago at East Culstead."

"I suppose the old church stands exactly as it did," said Aunt Barbara, "with its yew-trees about it, and the quaint almshouses just outside the graveyard wall?"

"Yes; there is little change in that part," Mr. Pendlebury answered. "You remember that is the quarter where the old mansions are, and they remain the same. Not one new house has been built there."

"And that is where Park House is. Aunt may have forgotten that," said Fanny, enticingly.

"And, aunt, do you remember the suicide's grave outside the consecrated ground?" asked Emma. "It must have been there in your

time. I wonder if you know more about it than we do?"

"It was there, Emma," Aunt Barbara replied; "but it was ancient then, and I never heard any history of it."

"Oh, I am sorry! and yet I don't know—I have made up many stories about it, and so I can still believe whichever I like."

"And perhaps the truth would not be very romantic, after all," said Gilbert.

"In the most common-place true tale of woe lies a depth which fancy never reaches," observed Aunt Barbara.

"Oh, Aunt Barbara!" cried Emma, "I am sure we never hear true stories so sad or so striking as we get in fiction—at least, I never do."

"I think sometimes that we never hear fact except in fiction, paradox as that sounds," said Miss Pendlebury. "It is not every one who can tell a true story truly. Imagine one of Shakespere's tragedies related by a police reporter!"

"How far we have wandered from poor Fanny's suggestion about Park House!" observed Mrs. Pendlebury. "But, as I tell the dear children, there is no need to be in a

hurry. I think they look upon their aunt as a rare bird whom they cannot feel safely in their possession till they have caged her. But I tell them she is on her native tree, and is not likely to fly away again."

"Have you put the old house by the works to any new use, brother?" Aunt Barbara asked, quietly.

"No," he said, "it stands just as it did. I keep a person in charge of it, and the furniture in the upper rooms is stacked away and covered up. The dining-room is kept in order after a fashion; but if I did not take my lunch there, and use the old bureau for my more private correspondence, the place would be practically useless."

"Miserable hole!" said Mrs. Pendlebury. "I am always persuading my husband to have it pulled down, since he says that, as it stands, it cannot be utilised for any business purposes."

"I am glad that he has spared it," said Aunt Barbara, "for that is where I wish to live."

Everybody at the breakfast table uttered exclamations of disgust, politely varied with declarations of utter incredulity, and assurances that Aunt Barbara would change her

mind when she saw the place in its present condition. Mr. Pendlebury himself was the least dismayed at the idea.

"I had always a weakness for the old house," he admitted, "and if father and you had gone abroad before I married, I should have liked to start in life there. In fact, I did wish to take up residence there when father went away, but the children were coming by that time, and Maria represented that it would be impracticable to bring them up in Perford. And I saw there was some force in her arguments."

"Indeed, I should think you did!" said his wife with a toss of her head. "And to talk about economy, too, as you talked. Economy! Common decency costs twice as much in Perford as does elegant comfort in Culstead." Then catching the asperity of her own tone, she moderated it. "Dear Barbara will soon find out her mistake. She will presently see the curious involvements and necessities of English society."

"Well, I must try the experiment," said Miss Pendlebury, with cheerful conciliation. "It was my father's express wish, and is my own earnest desire. And I know you will all

help me to carry it out. If, as you say, it is impossible, you need not be afraid that I can't make it possible."

"You can look over the old house whenever you like," said her brother. "Looking at the matter practically, I'm afraid you will find it terribly dirty."

"I will go this morning. Won't some of the young people come with me?" she asked, looking brightly round the circle.

"I will," said Peter.

"Should be most happy," said Gilbert, "but I have a very particular appointment in East Culstead. Can I do anything for you in that direction? Hate to seem as if I was selfish."

"Dear Gilbert!" pleaded his mother, "your aunt will quite understand all about it. Nobody could imagine you selfish."

"The girls can go at any rate," said their father. "It is their business to take interest in anything concerning the future of their grandfather's family residence."

"And I want to know what each of you young people would like as a remembrance of your grandfather?" observed Aunt Barbara. "I told your mother yesterday evening that he

expressly wished me to give you some personal present, as a keepsake from him."

"I told the girls about his thoughtful kindness before you came down to breakfast," interposed Mrs. Pendlebury with a furtive glance at Fanny's sulky countenance, "and they said they would like a little time to consider—they cannot decide rashly on a gift to be surrounded by such sacred memories. Gilbert hears of it first from your own lips now, Barbara; but I am sure he will feel the same."

"And what will Peter like?" asked the aunt, turning to the lad with a smile, whose fondness was a pathetic reflection from affections of long ago.

"Oh!"—he blushed violently—"I should like a good microscope; I have wanted one a ~~long~~ while; but"—and the blue eyes looked with boyish frankness—"will that be the ~~right~~ sort of thing?"

"Whatever you wish yourself your grandfather wished to give you," reiterated Aunt Barbara; "and I am sure he would have approved highly of your choice."

My daughters will be ready to join you shortly, sister," said Mrs. Pendlebury, rising from the table and giving the girls a

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signal to do likewise. "We must have a little consultation about household matters, you understand," she explained with an acid smile, "and then they will be at your service for the rest of the day."

"Ma, is not this preposterous?" cried Fanny, almost before they had closed the dining-room door.

"Fanny, I believe it is your fault," said her mother, severely. "If, before breakfast, you had met my wishes in a proper spirit, and your aunt had felt us to be all happy and harmonious, I believe she could never have had the heart to shock us with this ridiculous idea! That is why I hate discords. When once there is disunion, nobody knows what may enter."

"Oh, nonsense, ma!" said Fanny. "She is not the sort of woman to be put down by any of your flat-ironing processes. This would have come under any circumstances. And it is too bad! We had looked forward with such delight to her coming."

"And I hoped that she would join her influence with mine to persuade your papa about many little things," observed the mother, thinking on Gilbert's military ambition. "She used to be womanly, I feel sure,

This comes of your poor grandpapa's strange whim of employing her as his secretary. These are all new ways since my time, girls, when the duties of wife and mother were thought enough for any woman."

"But Aunt Bab is neither wife nor mother," said the impatient Fanny ; "yet I do know what you mean, ma, and it does stick the nasty old Works closer to us than ever when a woman of the family is to be connected with them. It does not matter so much what the men are ; though I should have liked Gilbert to get a commission, that we might have a brother in the army, and keep up with the Weston girls with their father, the late canon, and their uncle, the major. Now, the future everybody will see before us, is of our subsiding into odd old maids, grubbing in a counting-house !"

"Oh no, my love !" said Mrs. Pendlebury, "the case is quite bad enough without any exaggeration. People don't think girls must resemble their maiden aunts, though it is quite natural they should look at their mothers to see what they may become in future life." And Mrs. Pendlebury looked down, and toyed with her rings, and paid herself an inward compliment.

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“And hers is quite slight mourning compared with ours,” Fanny began again.

“It is very singular she should not have crape on all her dresses,” said Mrs. Pendlebury; “She had none on the gown she travelled in, nor on that she is wearing to-day. But she must have one or two proper mourning dresses for formal occasions.”

“And I dare say she is one of those excellent women who save their best clothes till they are out of fashion,” answered Fanny. “But I will let her know what is expected of her here.”

“Fanny,” said Mrs. Pendlebury, “she is your papa’s sister, and you must not hurt her feelings. And eccentric people can be easily pleased by humouring their oddities.”

“I won’t offend her, never fear,” returned Fanny. “But before we indulge her in her queernesses, let us find out whether she means them, or makes them in a mistake. Because, if the latter, she is sure to get enlightened in time, and then she’ll hate us for letting her make a fool of herself.” And, without waiting to hear her mother’s murmured expostulation about “her way of putting things so bluntly,”

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Fanny returned to the breakfast-room and assailed her aunt.

"We shall be ready for you in five minutes now, auntie," she said. "I thought I would give you a little notice, in case you wish to change your dress before you go out."

"I think this one will do," said Miss Pendlebury.

"Oh! certainly, it is more than good enough for going about that horrible Perford, and over that dirty old house, aunt; but then, you see, to get there, we must cross the common, and a few Culstead people do take walks at this hour, and the moment they see an elder lady with us they will infer that you are our expected aunt, just come in after our grandfather's funeral, and our being in deeper mourning than you are might puzzle them."

"You allude to my having no crape on this dress," said Aunt Barbara straightforwardly. "I have no crape on any dress."

"I dare say you did find it hard to get civilised things in your seclusion, poor dear auntie," observed Fanny sympathizingly.

"I could have bought crape easily," answered Miss Pendlebury, "but I do not think

it is a civilised thing. I think it is a relic of barbaric dust and ashes."

"But then, why do you wear mourning at all?" asked Fanny, trying to speak as respectfully as she could.

"It seems natural and wise to give some outward sign that one has had a sorrow," replied her aunt; "it secures one a little consideration and kindness among strangers, and explains traces of tears and sadness which might otherwise excite unpleasant attention."

"Yes, but the kind of mourning marks the degree of our respect for the dead," argued Fanny. "I think you have forgotten the feeling which exists in England about this sort of thing. The very poorest will sacrifice any thing to secure what they call a good funeral and decent mourning. Why, when our washerwoman's mother died in the workhouse, she spent four pounds in black clothes. And there were the Westons: it was notorious on what bad terms they had always lived with their grandfather, who was a horrid old bore, but you have no idea how careful they were about the burial and the mourning—they spent six or seven pounds on floral wreaths

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and crosses alone, and the very scullery-maid had one crape fold on her dress."

"Your arguments are all in my favour, Fanny," said Aunt Barbara. "Of what value are marks of respect that can be bought by the negligent and undutiful, and are likely to be in highest request among them as a cheap and ostentatious covering for their sins of omission? And, taken at its best, what a horrid sham is conventional mourning, meting itself out to a conventional appraisement of grief—so many folds of dinginess for some near relation, with whom we may have had nothing in common but blood, so slight 'complimentary mourning' for some friend who has been the light of our life. If ever a pomp of woe is excusable, it is in those cases when the world does not prescribe it, and when it might be an external protest against that hollow-heartedness which talks of 'only a friend.' "

"Well, I don't care," said Fanny, illogically. "I only know that everybody feels it is their duty to get the best mourning they can afford, and they give a wide margin as to what they can afford. I remember our governess telling us that her mourning for her mother cost her

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as much as she could possibly save out of  
year's earnings."

"And that poor thing probably spent ~~h~~  
money because she feared to be thought  
guilty of paltry economy if she did not do so  
answered Miss Pendlebury. "Because ~~she~~  
knew the world would reckon not by what  
she had, but by what she had not. It was a  
weakness, yet I can sympathise with it. But  
nobody who knows me can imagine that I  
could not afford the best mourning in the  
land; and nobody who knew my father and  
me will believe that we did not love each  
other. So my conduct makes it a little easier  
for those who cannot easily waste money in  
many unserviceable and unbeautiful black  
garments to dispense with them."

"But I don't know that mourning is un-  
beautiful," observed Emma, who had entered  
the room while her aunt was speaking. "It  
suits some people, and it makes everybody  
interesting."

"Then those, who, in the depth of their  
sorrow, feel unable to think of new love and  
sympathy, will not put it on till their grief  
begins to soften," answered Aunt Barbara.  
But she drew in her breath like one who

is struggling with an antagonist whom his weapons will not touch.

Fanny had been reflecting on the whole bearing of her aunt's ideas. The habit of looking into the rights and wrongs of things was a worry to one who liked to run swiftly and triumphantly down the smooth road of custom. But Aunt Barbara was a fact which must be made the best of, and Fanny began to see where something pleasing to herself might grow in this unpleasing and unlikely turning. Fanny had chafed at the restraints of the family mourning. She had enjoyed the handsome fresh dresses whose gloom and severity gave a novel piquancy to her own appearance. She had still more enjoyed getting rid of all her coloured dresses, even of some hardly worn, on the plea that their fashion would change. That was a move which secured the delightful prospect of an entirely new wardrobe when the season of mourning should pass. The drawback to her pleasure had been the seclusion wherein her jet ornaments and her fascinating *tout-ensemble* could not be displayed to their best advantage. It struck her that Aunt Barbara's views might relax such retirement.

"I always did think it rather foolish to shut one's self up because there has been death," she remarked. "Surely it is just then one needs a little society and amusement to cheer one up! Don't you think so, Aunt Barbara?"

"I think one should do whatever cheers one, and go wherever one is cheered," said Miss Pendlebury. "Grief is not a virtue to be cherished, but a wound to be healed. Only real sorrow—especially if healthy—the sorrow of a sound mind and a loving heart, will probably be more soothed by retirement and a quiet round of duty than by mingling with acquaintances or going sight-seeing."

"But if one cannot feel the real thing, why feels one ought to do so, should one make-believe, and act as if one did?" asked Fanny.

"No," said Miss Pendlebury. "All 'make-believe' is bad. Let us be sincere at any cost, and then if we are in the wrong the punishment will fall in the right place. And as I said before, grief is not a virtue; so why pretend it? Real sorrow cannot come very often in one life."

"Oh, can you say so!" exclaimed Emma. "Think of any life you know. Even think of your own, and you are still young, Aunt Barbara, and have been fortunate."

"My mother, your grandmother, died when she was a young woman and I was a little child," said Miss Pendlebury. "And that was an untold loss, but it was not a real sorrow, for that I was not old enough to feel. I cried for my mamma, when I missed her, for weeks and months; but I had intervals when I enjoyed my toys and the garden as much as ever."

"And dear grandpapa?" said Emma. "I am sure that is a real sorrow."

Tears came to Aunt Barbara's eyes. "It is a real sorrow," she said, "but there is no anguish in it. My father had finished a long and useful life; he had sat down to wait for death. His loss is natural. It is neither a blow nor a wrench; but the falling of the ripe fruit in the harvest season. We have only to bear his memory in our hearts and to follow on behind him. It is the way that God has appointed."

"But all death is by the will of God," whispered Emma somewhat awed.

“All death is by God’s permission,” said Miss Pendlebury; “yet you cannot say the will of God is done when a man is murdered, or dies of some accident or illness which we can see was brought about by human carelessness or wickedness. And all death out of season must come by somebody’s breaking of some law of God, though it may be a law not yet known to any of us, and only to be found by much seeking. And that is why I think it is quite natural that in parents’ sorrow for dead children there should be an anguish and a bitterness unknown to the sorrow of children for departed parents. That pang is God’s finger, writing, ‘Search into the cause of this thing, for this is not My pleasure.’”

“Then you think that one may be as happy as one can, though one has had a loss such as ours?” said Fanny after a moment’s pause, letting the solemnity of the subject pass her, as the night wind passes over a stone. “You see we did not even know dear grandpapa.”

“Be as happy as you can,” assented Aunt Barbara; “go wherever you feel you will be happy, and think only of the dead as of somebody who may see where you go, and will be quite satisfied if you are good and do good.”

"I suppose grandpapa's funeral was quite simple," said Emma; "and did you put up just a white cross to mark his grave? I love a cross for a tombstone—especially a Runic cross."

"No tombstone is put up at all," replied Miss Pendlebury; "he wished his grave to be made level with the ground. The turf will be green over it by this time. I wanted the place to have a memorial of him, not of the death of his poor worn-out body, but of himself, when he was comparatively well, and merry, and busy. So I have left orders that a little drinking fountain shall be built over a delicious spring in his favourite lane, and that a bench shall be put up on a mountain ridge whence one sees a glorious view of the valleys. And both are to be inscribed with his name. I suppose that's a weakness; but I like to think of the thirsty and weary travellers repeating it, and wondering over it, and linking it with their refreshment and rest."

"Dear me!" said Fanny with ill-affected interest. "But it is time for us to start if we intend to explore Perford to-day. And oh! Emma," she said as the two sisters went off together to dress, "we must tell mamma that

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if we are to please aunt by humouring **her** eccentricities, then we must begin to receive our friends again ; and I think we can work the oracle so as to put in an appearance at **the** Prides' next croquet match. Won't that **be** jolly ?"





## CHAPTER VI.

### PLEBEIAN PRIDE.

**H**E strong English air rushed at Miss Pendlebury like a boisterous old friend. The girls exclaimed against it, and said they hated walking out on such rough days, because the wind ruffled their hair and took the curl from their feathers. But they did not accept their aunt's proposal that they should return, and leave her and Peter to pursue their walk alone.

Vivid as were Aunt Barbara's remembrances of all the past, there was scarcely a bush or bend of the road which did not recall something which had faded from her mind. Under that oak, on one fine summer day five-and-twenty years ago, had gathered a joyful little party, not one of whom she was likely to see again in this life. She remembered who

had repeated the old saying about gorse, pointing to the great bush on the ridge, then as now putting forth a new golden glory. To her ear long-hushed voices mingled with the heedless chatter of her companions, who were telling her of the occupants of the houses they passed, and freely criticising their characters and establishments.

“That is the Prides’ new place,” said Fanny, indicating a great house shining with Ross-shire granite, and with palings gilded at every possible point. “They came from the house where I wanted you to live. It got too small and quiet for their grandeur, and Mr. Pride built this, and they have been here about six months. They are the richest people in Culstead, and Mr. Pride aspires to have everything in the style of a nobleman: and there is such a ridiculous discrepancy between him and his surroundings, that I don’t wonder the people nickname him ‘Plebeian Pride.’”

“Surely I know the name!” said Aunt Barbara. “Are these the Prides who once kept a mercer’s shop in Perford, and who, I heard, had removed their business to London, and had made a mint of money?”

“The same,” Fanny answered. “Mr.

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Pride speculated largely in house property and mining shares, and everything he touches turns to gold. He is quite a common sort of man, and they do say that Mrs. Pride was maid-of-all-work at the shop where he first served behind the counter. People were very shy of them when they first came up here; but he set his heart on pushing into society, and got a fine carriage for her, and sent her about everywhere. A story runs, that when she called on Lady Louisa Wyvern, and sent up her card, her ladyship sent it down again with the message that she always dealt with Howell and James, as if she thought her visitor was touting for custom."

"By which wilful misconstruction, if the story be true, her ladyship showed herself more ignorant and vulgar than poor Mrs. Pride could possibly be," observed Miss Pendlebury.

"They say that Mr. Pride raged terribly, and swore that he would bring down the im-pudence of the cursed aristocracy, for if they would not come to his entertainments, they should have to miss the best entertainments in the county," related Fanny, with infinite gusto. "But very few of them do so; though, as for

Lady Louisa, she soon came round, for she wanted old Pride's influence in his borough to get her brother, Lord Roffe, returned for Parliament ; so she made up to the family most affably, and everybody made believe to forget everything for mutual convenience. And, of course, the young Prides are quite presentable."

"Poor Mrs. Pride!" sighed Aunt Barbara.

"Why! do you know about her?" asked both the girls in astonishment.

"I only wondered how she feels," said Aunt Barbara.

"Oh, she is called an invalid—nerves disordered, and so forth," confided Fanny ; "but the truth is, she drinks. You may go to their parties twenty times, and only see her once, and then she sits still, and says nothing. She is rather a fine-looking woman, but an awful wreck. Kate, the daughter, takes after her."

"I like Mrs. Pride, and don't believe half the gossip about her," said Peter. "She used to call me into their garden as I went by to school, and give me plums and cherries. But I have not seen her now for a long time," he added.

“Hush! here is Kate Pride herself,” said Fanny, as a lady on horseback turned the corner, and rode slowly towards them, followed by her groom. She was a handsome girl, but her face looked angry and dissatisfied, and she rode listlessly and did not seem to see them till she had nearly passed them, when she reined in her horse and stooped to shake hands. Her words were pleasant, but her tone was mocking, and matched the expression of her countenance.

“I know it is not etiquette to introduce people in the public road,” said Fanny, who spoke with a gushing civility, “but you have heard so much of our Aunt Barbara that you will scarcely need an introduction.”

“I don’t care a straw for etiquette,” answered Miss Pride; “but I don’t know that I have heard you speak much of your Aunt Barbara, though probably she has heard all about us, since you have just passed our house.”

“Aunt was admiring it,” said Fanny, dauntlessly.

“You need not tell fibs to please me,” returned Miss Pride. “I don’t admire it myself.”

“What a terrible creature you are!” giggled Fanny. “You never can refrain from airing your wit.”

“Was that wit?” asked Miss Pride. “Then everybody can be witty if they like, for most people are disagreeable by nature.”

“What a character you are!” said Fanny. “I believe you and Aunt Barbara will be a pair of dear friends, for you are both so original.”

“We don’t wear ready-made ideas, you mean,” answered Miss Pride; “but we may follow different fashions for all that,” and she flashed a keen glance at Miss Pendlebury, while the hard lines of her mouth slightly relaxed.

“And is Captain Jack really gone?” asked Fanny.

“Jack is really gone,” replied the young lady, patting her horse, who reared at the moment and made the group retreat. It seemed to alarm Emma Pendlebury, for her face turned crimson. “And Peter,” Miss Pride went on, “how are you? Mother was talking of you this morning. Won’t you send her your love? Be a good boy, and keep un-spoiled as long as you can. Good-bye.” And

she rode off at a brisker pace, without one backward glance.

"That girl might have been married over and over again," said Fanny to Aunt Barbara as they resumed their walk. "It is said that Lord Rosse proposed to her. He was at the house a great deal. He is poor, and in great debt and difficulty, and the fortune she will have would have been an advantage to his rank. They say she told him she did not think his title worth the buying. Her father was very angry with her, and since then they have never been seen together out-of-doors. The poor old gentleman looked to her to carry out the ambition of his life, and she seems bent on disappointing him. It is to be hoped that his son will marry some woman who will be equal to the requirements of the family fortune. It is so strange to be at entertainments where one lady of the house never appears, and the other seems anxious to repudiate all interest in the affair."

"Is this captain whom you inquired about the son of whom you speak?" asked Aunt Barbara.

"Yes; he is the only son, and a handsome, dashing fellow. His father was delighted at his going into the army, and gives him the

most liberal allowances. It was his example which fired our Gilbert with military ardour. But papa sees things rather differently from Mr. Pride."

"What is young Pride like in character?" asked Aunt Barbara, having her own intuitions as to the sort of ideal likely to be set up by her nephew Gilbert.

"Oh, delightful!—most interesting! but so wild, I'm afraid," said Emma.

"Then I hope he is no friend of Gilbert's or yours, my dear," observed Aunt Barbara quietly.

"Oh, we must not be too severe," pleaded Emma. "He will grow steadier if he marries: and men who have been a little wild make the best husbands, because they know how to appreciate good women."

"And what good woman would want an appreciation paid for by the degradation of other women?—for that is always involved in what is called 'wildness,'" said Aunt Barbara. "And to what would such appreciation amount? Merely to a belief that the wife is what she is because she was born in a rank of life guarded from temptation."

"Mamma says we have no right to think about these things," said Emma demurely.

“ Some people have that opinion,” Aunt Barbara answered. “ But from your own words it is evident that you do think about them, only you do not think aright.” And the two walked on in silence till they were again overtaken by Fanny and Peter, who had lingered a little behind. They were quite near Perford now, when a large notice-board erected on the edge of the common caught their eyes, and they paused to read it.

“ Site of Proposed Sewage Manure Works,” repeated Aunt Barbara. “ Oh, what a pity !” she cried, looking round on the billowy grass, with its crests of golden-blooming gorse glowing in the fickle spring sunshine as if there was no such thing as desolation or destruction in the world.

“ Yes, it always seems a pity, doesn’t it ?” said Fanny. “ But we can’t see this part of the common from Culstead. You have no idea how the road dips. The worst that the change can do to us is to give another tall chimney to the distant view. You can notice, looking back from this point, that your eye cannot travel beyond that ridge above us. This bit of the common belongs, in all senses, to Perford, and I don’t suppose

the Perford folk have such a sense of beauty that they will not prefer the manure works, if they bring some more wages to their empty pockets. Not that they are at all averse to get up a sentimental grievance to thwart their betters ; but I don't think they will do so just now, for there is a great deal of distress in the town, and most of the factories are only working half-time."

"How is it that you know so much as this about business, Fanny?" asked her aunt.

"Because papa makes the hard times an excuse for begrudging us any little extra we want," pouted Fanny. "I have been teasing him for riding horses for the last six months, and he has not given in yet."

"My dear girls," said Aunt Barbara very quietly, and with a bright pink flush on her cheeks which made her look quite young, "I don't like to begin to preach to you, because we have not yet had time to make friends. But it strikes me that you are taking up life by the wrong end, so that everything therein may be spoiled. You are young and healthy and rich, and the problems and agonies of life are not forced upon you, and you seem to forget that you are not

therefore absolved from reflecting on the one and sharing in the other. You thrive on Perford's prosperity; you should bear your part in Perford's adversity, and so far from grudging that your father thinks it unwise to choose this time for granting you new luxuries, you should be ready to give up some of those you have, that you may keep fellowship with those who are losing their usual comforts and necessities."

"All the factory people are improvident," said Fanny, ignoring the spirit of the little lecture. "When they get high wages they do not save."

"I know they are rather thriftless," Miss Pendlebury replied. "But I don't think we have the best right to cast stones at them for that. You two girls together doubtless spend much more on your dress than suffices to keep many a working man's family in Perford."

"Oh, of course, it is absurd to expect us to enter into their little peddling economies," said Fanny, choosing to misunderstand her aunt's remark. "But I am sure it is their own fault that they are always in such misery. In a little village where we sometimes spend a week in summer time the labourers don't get

half the wages pa pays in Perford, and yet their homes seem quite comfortable and their children nice and pretty."

" You forget that income does not always represent the same thing," said Aunt Barbara " I knew something of village life in England twenty years ago, and I suppose it has changed less than anything else in this busy country. And I know clean and roomy cottages were to be had for half the rent which your father tells me is now paid for a single filthy room in Perford. And I know the labourers on the squire's land received a gallon of milk a day for their home use; and I know they grew all their fruit and vegetables in their own gardens, and had a little over to supply the village shop and inn; and they could keep fowls, and generally a pig. And in the village which I knew best, as I suspect in many others, there was one family of superior position to every six or seven of the poor families. And so the squire's maiden sister paid for the schooling of the fatherless children; and the squire's mother gave the old rheumatic folk the reversion of her woollen shawls and socks; and the parson got the crippled boy placed as pupil-teacher.

in the school ; and the mistress of the shop looked after all the likely girls, and recommended them into domestic training under good old servants. And though there was rather a dearth of amusements, cricket matches and quoits cost nothing, and the parson sent round his newspapers, and there were always the gardens to potter over, and the choir met once a week all the year round, and the glee-club in the school-room in the winter-time."

"What an Eden of a Sleepy Hollow!" scoffed Fanny. "But we can't make Perford into such a Paradise, and, thank goodness, we cannot be the squire's maiden sisters."

"But why should not you be as closely associated with your father's workpeople as a squire's daughters are with his tenants and labourers?" persisted Aunt Barbara. "Why should not you know them, and know how to help them, as friends can help each other?" But as she said the last words Miss Pendlebury felt in her heart that her nieces knew nothing of that friendship which is loving service, but gave its name to a barren association for mutual polite persecution.

They were in the heart of Perford by this

time, and within sight of the gates of Pendlebury's Works. Suddenly a crowd rushed out—a crowd silent with that peculiar hush which always means strong excitement. Something was carried in the midst of it.

"It's an accident!" cried Emma, turning to flee. "Come back, come back! they will have to bring it this way towards the hospital."

"Your father!" gasped Aunt Barbara.

"Oh, he's all right," said Fanny, promptly "it's only one of the men; it's always happening I must go after Emma," she added, and Emma had already retreated far up the hilly street.

Aunt Barbara and Peter stood aside in a narrow turning to let the crowd pass by. Down that turning one could see the great elms waving over the black palings of Perford Churchyard. And down that turning, walking swiftly in the very middle of the road, came a tall girl, wearing a long purple cloak and a close bonnet. Her blue eyes were set wide, and seemed without cognizance. Her mantle blew round her unclasped, and showed her ungloved hands clenched upon each other. She did not notice the foremost stragglers of the crowd, and she would have walked straight on, and come

face to face with its terrible secret, had not Miss Pendlebury instinctively stopped her, saying, "Wait! there has been some dreadful accident at the Works."

From gracious habit the white lips parted in a sweet smile, even before full comprehension struggled into the blue eyes. The girl looked round with a start. In leaving Mrs. Moffat's house to return home, though it was a path she had trodden nearly every day of her short life, Lois Enticknapp had actually turned the wrong way.





## CHAPTER VII.

### A PROMISE.

**T**HE two women and Peter waited side by side till the crowd passed. Then Peter followed in its rear to inquire what the accident was. He came back, looking grave.

"It's one of our head men, and his right arm is crushed," he said. "I know the machine which did it," he added, "and when I've watched it, I've wondered that such things do not happen every day."

"Did you hear his name?" asked Aunt Barbara. "I wonder if he has a wife, and who will tell her about it?"

"I think I have met him walking with a woman and little children," Peter answered. "His name is William Summers, but I don't know where he lives."

“Summers!” exclaimed Lois Enticknapp.  
“Oh, poor things! Here is more trouble for them, and she is ill and away.”

Miss Pendlebury turned to the speaker. There seemed something familiar in the fresh young face—fresh even in the paleness which had swept across its roses. “I have only yesterday come to Perford after twenty years’ absence,” she said, “and when I went away you could not have been at all like what you are now, and yet I seem to know you.”

“I am Lois Enticknapp,” said the girl.

“Then you are a good man’s daughter, and you have his eyes,” responded Aunt Barbara warmly. “But we shall have plenty of time to be civil to each other. Can we do anything for this poor man or his family?”

“The ailing wife and the little ones are at the seaside,” said Lois. “I know their address, but I suppose I should go on to the hospital and learn the exact best and worst of everything before I telegraph.”

“May I go with you?” asked Aunt Barbara. “I am Miss Pendlebury of the Works, so I have a personal interest in this.”

“Miss Pendlebury!” echoed Lois, with a

flash of pleasure which suddenly faded into the strange and troubled preoccupation which seemed to beset her. "I have heard much of you. My mother has so often wished that you were here."

"I shall not go away again," said A. Barbara, as they walked down the street together. "I want to spend the remainder of my days among our own people; and if what I know of the way of life of your house, Miss Enticknapp, I expect that nobody will be better able to make me acquainted with your place and its inhabitants than yourself."

"One cannot help knowing a great deal when one lives in one place as long as we have lived here," answered Lois; "and yet there must be much going on close beside us of which we never dream."

The hospital door had closed behind the wounded man, to keep back the unnecessary and inquisitive crowd. Miss Pendlebury's name might have served as a passport for her party, but Lois's presence made its function superfluous. The old door-porter knew her nearly as well as he knew the hospital surgeon; and a nurse, at that moment coming into the hall, came forward and explained

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If they could wait till the sufferer was in bed and cared for, she thought it was possible he might be permitted to give Miss Enticknapp his own message for his wife.

The place was unutterably dismal and desolate, but the old porter evidently wished to be as civil as he could, for he hobbled about and unlocked a side door, and made a few little arrangements in an inner chamber before he invited them to enter and take a seat. Had Miss Pendlebury known more of Lois Enticknapp, she would have been struck by the singular chill of her manner. As it was, she thought it out was of harmony with her sweet solicitous face, and remarkably different from the cordiality which she recalled as a characteristic of Jacob and his Quaker wife. Lois did not seem even to notice the seat which the old man placed for her beside Aunt Barbara and Peter, but walked down the room and took up her station at the window, overlooking a little bare yard, where one or two convalescent patients were feebly sauntering to and fro.

It was a gruesome chamber, not intended for a waiting-room, but used as a storing-place for surgical and invalid appliances, and

garnished with bundles of crutches and heaps of leg-rests and the like. The old porter did not think it a bad place: it was evidently his own retreat on leisure afternoons, for his spectacles and a newspaper lay on a little deal sideboard. He seemed by no means unwilling to draw attention to its dismal furniture, for he counted over the crutches and rubbed up a steel spinal support. Miss Pendlebury's quick eye detected the absence of an article to which she had grown sadly accustomed during her father's long illness. She thought there might be some newer substitute which she did not recognise, so she inquired, with the interest of a practical nurse, "What kind of bed-rest do you use in this hospital?"

The old man shook his head. "We don't have no such luxuries here," he said. "We's very poor for the work we has to do. And, somehow, the reg'lar sick cases don't seem to linger out so long as they did in the big place where I was ward-porter when I was young. Mayhap the people hereabout are kinder more worn out before they down-right sickens. Well, we does our best for them, and it's a sight better than they could get in their own

homes, though that ain't a-saying much, if you knowed 'em."

"What clergymen or ministers visit the place?" asked Aunt Barbara.

The old man gave a short chuckle. He seemed to have a certain grim and ghoulish humour. "Anybody's own minister can come, in course," he replied; "but in a general way, we don't keep ministers of our own in here. There's one dissenting chap as comes oftenest, as looks as if he'd see'd a deal o' trouble of his own, and he picks up with other folk, besides whoever he comes to. Our old wicar were worry good—any extras he'd see perwidet, and beautiful fine old linen he allays sent, and he were a wise man about witnessing little bits o' wills, and giving good advice to them as was left behind. That was the sort o' work he could do—they say he wasn't muchly much of a preacher. That's the new wicar's turn—he's asked all over the country to give 'em charity sermons, 'cause he gets the money out of 'em, an' he comes in here for half an hour sharp, and puts up a real stirring discourse, and asks 'em each right out about their souls. He's worry busy just now, working with the London Committee

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for reconciling two parties as has fallen out in Chinee. He gets real awful-like letters from his son, who's in the Chinee trade. Our doctor says, says he, 'I hope he isn't in the opium traffic,' says he; 'and d'ye think we'd be more interestin' to him, Bob, if we all put on pigtails?' Doctor's a queer one. Some say he don't believe in God, but I've always found him a very fair-actin' gentleman. An' there's the nurse a-callin' ye now, Miss Enticknapp. That's a good one," added the old man, as the girl went off with her quick light step, but without one glance at Miss Pendlebury or Peter. "She's one of our staff, one may say, 'cept that she gets nothing for it, but rather pays for the privilege. None of us minds what favours we ask of her—we kinder think it's her business to do our little jobs. Says I to our doctor once, says I, not asking what he thought on't, but just suggestin', as one may say, 'If there ain't no God, doctor,' says I, 'I can't make out where Miss Lois comes from.' And he turned and looked at me, did the doctor, an' answered never a word."

Lois was not long gone. She came back almost her usual self.

"They say it will be a long case, anyhow,"

she said, "and it may turn out badly. A few hours will decide that. The wife is to be sent for: he has told me what I am to say. Now I must look up the time-table, and find what train it will be best for her to catch. And I think I had better go round to their house, and see who is taking care of it, and if anything there needs doing."

"I came down to Perford to look over the house by our Works," explained Miss Pendlebury. "I mean to live there. I think I shall go there now, and I shall stay there some time. Will you look in there on your return, and tell me if I can do anything to help these poor people?"

"Certainly I will do that," said Lois, with that strange restraint suddenly returning upon her, as she went off alone.

The house by the Works was dreary enough to the eye of a stranger, and seemed doubly dreary to her who remembered it neat and cared for. It was not absolutely dirty. The steps were only grey, the brass fittings of the door merely dim. The hall-chairs were out of repair. A row of empty flower-pots stood on the ledge of the staircase-window, whence one got a view of the overrun garden, where

a laburnum and a lilac hung their cheer-~~—~~ bloom above the mass of weeds. Mr. Pendlebury's study had a sort of grim official order-~~—~~ but the other rooms wore a ghastly air — desolation, especially the one or two in which the furniture was not merely stacked, but kept in something of its ancient arrangement. Yet Barbara Pendlebury's heart warmed to the faded place. It might be but a skeleton of its past self, but it was the skeleton of a home, and her quick woman's eye could see at every point what little touches would work wonders.

"Be you coming to sleep here to-night, ma'am?" asked the iron-grey housekeeper, a woman whom Miss Pendlebury did not know, who had not known Miss Pendlebury of old, and who felt that she must be prepared for any freak in a lady who could choose to live at Perford.

Barbara longed to say "Yes." But at forty-five we remember we have bodies as well as sentiments. So she only echoed dubiously—

"To-night! Surely the place must be damp!"

"Damp, bless you, ma'am!" responded the other, with a shade of contempt. "Damp!"

Do you think Mr. Pendlebury would put up with a smell of mustiness? There's been fires in each room here, regular, turn and turn about, every winter since I've been here, and that's fourteen years come next Midsummer. And I thought it would be for my lifetime!" she added in a plaintive undertone. "I were maid to Mrs. Pendlebury's ma—till she died, and they thought this was a sort of purvision for me, though it's different from what I was used to in her beautiful willa in a nice genteel neighbourhood. An' I've always spread out the beds, an' the linen, an' a few hours' airing is all they'll need, Miss, if so be as you can make up your mind to live here at all." The last few words were emphasized.

"I can go on better with my restorations the sooner I am on the spot," said Miss Pendlebury to her nephew in a reflective aside.

"And if you think you'll be lonesome, I'll stay with you, aunt," said Peter.

A ring at the bell interrupted the debate. The housekeeper came back with a frowning face.

"It's the baker's daughter, mum," she

announced severely. "An' she says you've told her to call on you here."

"Show Miss Enticknapp up-stairs," said Aunt Barbara. And the injured woman went off with an indignant shuffle.

"The Summers' house is being whitewashed and re-papered, against the wife's return," narrated Lois Enticknapp. "All the furniture is piled up in the middle of the rooms, except one mattress, whereon the poor man slept last night. The men have left off working, and are gone to another job. I remonstrated with them, but they said they must look after 'sure money.' You see the Summers have bought their house through a building society, so there's no landlord to look to for repairs. A number of the neighbour women are gathering and hanging about. Poor Mrs. Summers!"

"The poor are always kind," observed Miss Barbara. "They will be good to her when she arrives."

Lois shook her head. "They don't mean to be unkind," she said, "but they can't help feeling rather glad that perhaps the Summers will now see the folly of what they call their 'stuck-up ways.'" They resented

her having a doctor of her own when she was ill instead of going to the hospital, and I fear they almost ill-wished her when her husband hired lodgings for her at the seaside. They said to me now, 'She'll find that her independence and gentility won't get her any help when she'll want it. People away at the seaside for their health can't be expected to need assistance.'

"I am half thinking of settling down in this house to-day," said Aunt Barbara, "and perhaps the housekeeper would put ready a room for this poor woman and her children, till their own house can be got in order again."

Lois Enticknapp looked up with the expression of one startled by an unexpected burst of sunshine. "Oh, if that could be done!" said she, "I would wait for the Summers family at the railway station and never take them near their own home at all, for the neighbours are sure to be on the watch for them, and they will tell the poor wife of every fatal case they know similar to her husband's. They don't mean to be cruel. They would not mind it if they themselves were in her position. Life seems to make some

people hard, so that a blow is pleasant by rousing some feeling. And now, as Mrs. Summers cannot reach Perford in less than three hours, I will go home and explain matters to my mother, for I have been out much longer than I intended."

"And give her my kind remembrances, and tell her I shall come to see her as soon as I can," said Barbara Pendlebury.

Lois Enticknapp went home a happier girl than she had been when Miss Pendlebury had met her walking like one in a dream, the wrong way down Church Lane. Lois had learned some of the meaning *in* her mother's warning, yet now she was *not* a whit sorry that her warm impulsiveness had overruled her mother's wisdom. She had heard a story of sin and shame, such indeed as she had half expected to hear, such as in its bare outline she had heard before. But all imagination had failed to appreciate the vast difference of its being told with a clinging hand pressing hers, and a sweet cultured voice sobbing forth details of incident and feeling which brought all the shame and misery to the quick of her own sympathy. Nor had she been prepared for

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the recital of the specious arguments by which Lydia Calderwood's path to ruin had been levelled, nor for the half-wild and passionate self-vindication which mingled even in the poor girl's remorse and eager reaching after restoration.

And though Lois Enticknapp had never been taught to close her eyes to the wickedness of the great world lying around her, yet it remains hard for young people—reared in pure and happy homes, whose sunshine seems to brighten everything within reach of its rays—to realise that, nevertheless, their own personal sphere is part of this terrible world. Perhaps we are all aware of a shock when, by a great crime forcing up its ugly head in an unexpected place, like a toadstool in a flower-bed, we learn that in some pleasant parlour, or amid some cheerful public meeting, we have been in the presence of one who now has "murderer" written after his name, and is on his road to the gallows. In Lydia Calderwood's story there was a name familiar to Lois Enticknapp, and the whole history was made alive to her mind by the presence of a figure which she had known all her life, and about which

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hung that strange misty confidence which mere familiarity often causelessly imparts. In youth, the neighbour of whom we know no good seems more trustworthy than the stranger of whom we know no evil. It takes a few bitter lessons to teach us that a rat is still a rat, and will gnaw away our roof-tree, though it feeds on our household crumbs.

Lois kept her counsel from Lydia Calderwood. From every word which Lydia said Lois felt sure she did not dream that in her forlorn despair, she had crept to the nest whence had flown the vulture who had wounded and stained her youth. The outcome of mystic creeds was in Lois's blood. She was the daughter of races who believed in "leadings" and "seeings." God himself might be leading this poor child, but she had best follow on unconsciously, lest she should put out a rash hand and sully the pure purposes in the secret of the Lord.

Though torn by the passionate pressure of reasonings such as she had never heard before and shaken as by an earthquake from the happy security in which her own life had been set, yet Lois Enticknapp had preserved

a front of cheerful and reassuring courage until she had left Lydia.

Then she had let in the full tide of terror and bewilderment. Then her new knowledge had turned upon her heart that grinning mask of cynical mistrust, which is never more than the mask of true wisdom.

The meeting with Miss Pendlebury only struck new discord on her jarred spirit.

Miss Pendlebury, rich, and richly connected, presented herself to Lois's mind only as a member of a class whose women condescendingly drop their dry crumbs on those below them, and close their eyes while the men of their class drop down poison. It was Lois's first realisation of distinctions in society which are not made by nature. Realisation is very different from knowledge. Such a moment was sure to give Lois an impetus either to receive such distinctions as something to be smiled over, and sweetened, or to rebelliously take them as they are, to the gradual embitterment of her whole nature.

No proffered money, no proxy help, would have softened the strange crust which was suddenly forming over Lois's feeling of fellowship with the more favoured of fortune—that

important link in the chain which binds all life in one. The simple offer of neighbourly service did it at once.

From Church Lane to the hospital, to the Summers' dwelling, to the house beside the Works, she had gone asking her heart, "Why did God make us able to be so miserable and so bewildered as some of us are? Is there any truth in what Lydia Calderwood said in her anguish, that for anything she has seen in her life God is not good but cruel, and that it is only because I have happened to be happy that I think otherwise? If I can't believe that God is as good to Lydia as to me, I cannot thank Him for his goodness; for it is not love, but partiality. I cannot even trust it. It would be like relying on a tyrant's favours." And then even the blu~~ing~~ spring sky looked hard and mocking.

But now she went back saying within herself, "What does it matter that I feel bewildered? I ought to be only thinking of poor Lydia. If I am learning some lessons I never had before, and cannot get over them at once, then I must put them aside to do the work which is pressing. A very little thing would drive Lydia away altogether. She is

anged even since last night. She seems think nobody will ever care for her, except a patronising way, and she does not want at. And it is not likely she can feel that d does really put away our sins from us, far as the East is from the West, and that r having to suffer for them is but the seal of is love and not the sign of His vengeance. id she says she will never be able to hold on right ways. I don't believe I spoke half eerfully enough to her. As I pass Mrs. offat's, I must go in and see her again for a moment."

She found the girl sitting forlornly on her v bed, with tear-traces on her cheeks ; she e and threw herself on Lois's shoulder. "I ought you would never come again," she ed ; "though you were so kind, I thought u would say, 'I can do her no good, and she kes me miserable.' I know I make you serable. And I don't mean half that I say ! it when I don't say it, I do mean it. Have tience with me. I do know that God is od, only I have been so wicked that He is gry with me."

"Yes, dear," said Lois, "angry with you as mother is when she whips her boy, because

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he disobeys her, and goes into dangerous places where he might be killed."

"But it is so easy to be wicked," sobbed Lydia.

"It is easier to be good if we would only believe it," said Lois, soothingly. "The world of it is, we won't believe it."

"Will you believe it for me?" asked Lydia, with her trembling hands clasped about Lois's throat. "Will you believe I will be good? Will you promise me I shall be good?"

A strange light shone in Lois's eyes. This was revealed to her an open secret which each must find out for himself, because words could not express and cramp its marvellous mystery.

"I will promise it, Lydia," she said solemnly, "but it must rest with you whether it shall begin here and to-day, somewhere else and a long time hence. I have given my promise. Now give me you that it shall begin this moment."

"I will! I will! God bless you!" sobbed the girl.

And Lois went home. Her mother asked little, and she did not say much. The wise Quakeress looked in her daughter's face, and saw there the first traces of Gethsemane.

struggle. Sinful souls are scarcely saved by the score, to the sound of hymn-singing and hallelujahs. In the Master's way of sacrifice must His brothers and sisters walk, and without shedding of blood—blood of brain, blood of heart, blood of life—there is no remission of sins.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### GOOD SAMARITANS.

**H**annah Enticknapp did not require from her daughter the detailed story of Lydia Calderwood, she did not need to put many questions to elicit all the bad news about the Summers family, and all the good news of Miss Pendlebury's advent in Perford.

“But Barbara Pendlebury will have but a comfortless time for the first few days in that great desolate dwelling,” she said. “She has lived so long in hired rooms, that she has doubtless forgotten that in one's own house comfort cannot be speedily hired, but must be slowly gotten. The sleeping chambers and the parlours can be soon put in readiness, but the kitchen takes time, thee knows. I think I must venture to pack a basket and send Else with it, and bid her stay and make herself

serviceable if she can. I will put in a cruet, and some biscuits, and some of my jams and jellies, Lois, and some tea and sugar, and a pound of our country butter, and six of the new-laid eggs, and a few slices of our best ham. For there will be none to send to market but that caretaking woman, who will have enough work in the house, and is not famous for the sweetness of her temper. And I will pack up all in some of our finest napkins, which may be serviceable if table napery is not readily at hand."

"How you do think of everything, mother!" said Lois. "Whatever turns up, you always remember something which you can do to help."

"That is easy, child," said the Quakeress. "It can be always done by keeping thy mind where thou art, instead of sending it to trifle where thou art not."

"And may I take some needlework to that poor girl?" Lois asked. "I don't mean to talk to her about payment for it at once: I fancy that might hurt her. I shall ask her to do it to help me. It must be so miserable for her to sit with folded hands in that little room."

"Thou mayst do whatever thou, who knowest most, thinks best," said the mother.

Lois went off to her bedroom and opened a great oak chest which stood in a recess. She had playfully called it her "work-box." It had held the marriage plenishing of her mother and her mother's mother. And now, once more, it was half-full of dainty white linen, partly made into neatly folded garments, partly cut out for making, and some of it still in rolls from the draper's shelf. Lois lingered as she looked in. Every stitch there had been set by herself. Her maidenly pride had determined that it should be so. She had said within her heart that none should do for painful hire what she could do in joy and love. But now she took out two of the prepared pieces, and made them into a little packet.

Hannah Enticknapp and her servant were not long in making their kindly preparations. There was no fear of packing the basket too heavily for Else, nor was its size any consideration to her simple strong-mindedness. It had needed all her dead master's arguments to convince her that it was not her duty, at a busy pinch, to snatch a baker's basket and go off to help the men in their delivery of loaves. Nay, she was never convinced.

“ Not woman’s work !” she would say in her deep guttural voice. “ Is it because it’s too hard or too easy? Is it not everybody’s work to do whatsoever his hand findeth? I hold with the Bible. Not thought becoming for women to be seen doing such things? Well, that’s as folks think, and most folks are fools. Yet women are to be seen doing many things that even a fool can scarcely think becoming. But I’m your servant, Herr Enticknapp, and if you choose me to waste my time, you pay for it.”

In fact, whenever Else Beck walked out, except when she went to “ worship,” she carried with her a wicker basket of some sort. “ That shows I’m a respectable servant,” she said. And Else honoured her order, and liked to sport its badge. “ Besides,” she added, with that stern practicality which redeemed her fashion from all fancifulness, “ one never knows when one may see something worth the buying. Many a woman passes good fish or fruit selling cheaply, because she has nothing to carry it home in.” Also, if Else ever accompanied her mistress or Lois, she studiously walked behind them, though not so far off as to be unable to interchange a remark. Lois’s sense of the fitness of things, of the superiority of Else’s

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age and character, joined with a noble youthful distaste for conventional class distinction had made her long ago rebel against Else's voluntary humility. She was wiser now, and quite understood that the worthy dame did not consider herself any inferior because she chose "to keep her place" behind her.

While Lois went on to the railway station she sent Else direct to the house by the Works, not without many exhortations to her to remember that Miss Pendlebury had been used to French and Italian manners. Else understood this, as it was meant, to signify that the lady might be puzzled and repelled by her blunt out-spokenness. But Else repudiated the possibility. "If she isn't a fool," said she—"and from what you say I've no reason to think she is—then she'll see through me in a minute, and know how to take me up right." And Else had her own message to send in return. "My respects to Mrs. Summers," she said, "and say I bid her keep her heart, and who knows but she may find her happiness where none but God could send her to look for it, in hardship and trouble?"

Lois feared no scene as she watched the slow incoming of the train which carried

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Summers family. She knew the woman with whom she had to deal. Mrs. Summers had not shed one tear since she heard of her husband's accident, and the two poor little children, seeing their mother seem so unchanged, could not realise that there was much amiss. They had been sorry to leave the sea so suddenly—only the more sorry because of daddy not coming to fetch them as he had promised that he would. He must go with them somewhere else, the poor mother had said calmly, while she sat and prayed that he might at least be alive when she got to Perford, secretly vowing that she would try to be content and submissive if she could only reach him in time to tell him that, perhaps, after all, she was not so ill as the doctors said, but might live to bring up the children, and to maintain such a home as should not disgrace his memory. As so often happens, it was the unexpected which had come upon the woman. None of her forebodings had ever pointed in this direction. Her forecasting fancies had seen her children in uncomforted motherlessness, and she had striven to so store the linen drawer, and toe and heel the stockings, as to defeat the malice of any jealous

sisters-in-law who should come in to succor the widower and cast stones on the memory of his dead wife. They had always pitied Will for marrying so sickly a woman. How would it feel to be pitied for surviving him? and would they contrive to blame her absence from home, as somehow the cause of his death? It was Will who made her go away. When she had whispered about economy, he had called her "penny wise and pound foolish," and had said that, on the lowest grounds, it was his best economy to save the life of his children and mother, even for a year or two.

She never thought of thanking Lois for coming to meet her—never dreamed of wondering when she was told to follow her to the house by the Works. Will was stricken down; Will was likely to die—that made strangeness of any sort a mere matter of course.

When they reached Miss Pendlebury's new habitation, Lois found a slight storm already blowing round it. The care-taker had resigned. "She was willin' to stay as long as Miss Pendlebury wanted her, but she was not accustomed to have strangers in her kitchen"—that was pointed at Else Beck—

“ nor was she going to be put about for riff-raff out of the town ”—that was the Summers family. Considering that poor Aunt Barbara and Peter had lunched on musty eggs and some of the cheapest bread and butter the town could provide, all carefully selected by the housekeeper in the fond hope that Miss Pendlebury might get “ a sickener of her nonsense,” Else Beck’s provender was far too welcome to be turned away, apart from the fact that Miss Pendlebury would on no account have spurned an offer of neighbourly kindness and help. Aunt Barbara would have borne a great deal herself, but she could not endure that her succour to Mrs. Summers should be imbibited by the jealousy and insolence of a menial spirit. Else Beck, grimly perched on the kitchen window seat, clutching her basket, saw the whole scene and told its story afterwards :—“ Miss Pendlebury turned round quite calm and firm, and told the housekeeper she had better go at once, and she would account for the sudden departure to the master, and her wages would be rightly settled. It’s those ladies up in Culstead, who can’t put their hands to anything themselves and don’t know a soul that can, who spoil servants, and are glad

to take any sauce from them, so as they get their dinners along with it. Madam house-keeper was cowed, but she hadn't sense to say she was sorry, only that she'd be happy to stay as long as she was wanted. And Miss Pendlebury thanked her quite pleasantly, but said she would not be wanted; but might remain in her own rooms, if she wished, till matters were arranged. An' I jumped up, and said my missress would spare me for the rest of the day, and I could manage makeshifts—and Master Peter, bless him! with his own hands began to clean the knives they had used at lunch."

Miss Pendlebury and Lois did not misunderstand Mrs. Summers' calmness, which most of the Perford women would have judged as apathy or ignorance which ought to be roused or enlightened by the dreariest prophecies. Aunt Barbara only hastened her off to the hospital, telling her the sight of her face would be the best help the doctors could have. The children could not go with her, and Aunt Barbara was prepared for a little waywardness or fretting on their part. But they showed none. They were not afraid of strangers, only they kept hold of each other's hands, and they knew Miss Lois and Else. They were accustomed to

be shut in rooms, and to be told to amuse themselves quietly, which was their mother's parting injunction. They established themselves at the kitchen window, whispering to each other about the "flowers," as they called the rampant weeds of the back garden.

Meanwhile, following Else's advice that "the best way to find what they wanted was to see what they'd got," Aunt Barbara, Lois, and Peter began to ransack and rummage. Miss Pendlebury remembered the secrets of the old house and its storages, but she opened her eyes and held up her hands in dismay when she saw the few chipped, charred, ill-used remnants of her mother's china closet. Open tarts had been baked in the Crown Derby plates: there was dripping still standing in a Chelsea bowl. Dirty shreds beside the dust-bin revealed that old damask napkins had been abused for dusters and dish-cloths. A Turkey rug, of the right age for subdued richness of colour, lay on the stone floor of the wash-house, befouled with splashes of grease and dirty water.

"Mother paid two guineas the other day for a plate with that mark on it," said Peter.

peering at the back of a potsherd which ~~his~~ aunt recognised as a fragment of a Worcester tea service.

"It's a wonder some dealer did not make love to that cross woman, and set up a shop out of this house," said Else Beck. Else was quite angry at the waste and ruin she saw, because she had a passion for conservation and order, distinct from all feeling of personal possession. "I'm glad there's dealers in the world," ~~she~~ said. "They pick up what people throw away with one hand, and they make them pay for ~~it~~ with the other."

"Dealers would die out if everybody was like you, Else," commented Lois.

"Yes," she said. "I do like to keep my own clean and wholesome, and no mistake about it. There's a rhyme—

"Save a thing for seven years, and that its price will bring.  
Save it seven times seven years, and it's a costly thing,  
But save it seven times that again, and give it to the king."

There's that old belt my grandmother wore on her wedding day—honest leather her uncle tanned, and honest silver her brother wrought,—there's those who would have been for breaking it up into little ornaments, and there's those that advised me to sell it by

weight; but there it's been, and there it is, and that's Lois's wedding-present-to-be." And Aunt Barbara saw that the girl's face bloomed like a rose.

Mrs. Summers came back presently. She had been crying bitterly, yet she smiled as she had not done in her calmness. Her Will had said to her, stretching out his unmaimed hand: "Poor old lady! I know the fountains are wanting to play; let 'em start: they won't hurt me." And the homely kindliness had relaxed the strain of her self-restraint. The doctors had let her have "a talk" with Will, well knowing that he would be the calmer after his little affairs were adjusted. And the strong light of his cheerful common sense had put out many of the will-o'-the-wisp fancies which had lent fantastic horrors to the dark hour of trial. The poor little woman had thought of pawnshops, of an execution in the house,—had even seen visions of herself and children selling matches or singing hymns in Perford High Street on Saturday nights. Will reminded her of his trades-union accident benefit. There was a little triumph in his reminder, for she, the daughter of a gamekeeper and of

generations of gamekeepers and bailiffs, had not looked too favourably upon his trades-union. "You see I've no squire to pension me," Will said; "my union is my squire." And the little wife answered not a word, except to express a meek hope that the sick steward who would inquire into Will's case would be a quiet, civil man. "I do believe in providing for one's self," she said, after a few minutes' silence; "but it can never do away with the need and worth of a helping hand." And then she told her husband of Miss Pendlebury's arrival in Perford, and of her offer of a better shelter for them than their own dismantled and now desolate home. And Will said Miss Pendlebury was "a brick," but would find his wife was worth her weight in gold in tidying up the old house. And he added that he was sorry to be the cause of bringing her back from the sea, just as she was growing blooming. And she answered, "Please God, Will, I may be a strong woman yet: maybe I've given way too soon." And with a kiss they parted, and though he was still a maimed man on a hospital bed, and she was a sickly woman returning to a stranger's house, they were both happy

ple, for their hearts were full of thankfulness blessings, and thankfulness is blessedness itself.

Aunt Barbara sent Peter into the counting-house, to ask his father to look in upon her before he returned to Culstead. She wished to explain to him the causes of her unexpectedly sudden settlement in the house by Works, and to convey, through him, her apologies and explanations to her sister-in-law and the rest of the household at Culstead. She trembled to reflect on the sensations her course of action would be sure to produce. Aunt Barbara was by no means indifferent to people's feelings and opinions; but was only resolved that they should not divert her from her sense of duty, or stifle her kindly impulses.

Lois assured her that Else Beck was at service for the whole evening, though herself must go away, for Lois wanted to show her needlework to Lydia before theateful sweet twilight hour in which the ghosts of the past, be they angels or fiends, are most apt to stir in the heart. Lois only longed to hear Mrs. Summers' report of her husband, and to see her and her children

seated with Else at their tea in the wic  
old kitchen, with the laburnum waving i  
branches across the cracked panes of the ol  
window. Lois knew the Summers' children  
and had taught them many little lesson  
She had taught them the "grace" whic  
now she bade them sing as soon as sh  
should be gone. They struck up its please  
tune almost before she had left the kitch  
and as she walked towards the parlour s  
saw, through its half-opened door, Aunt B  
bara sitting on a low chair, with a look up  
her face which showed that the childlike voi  
had unwound a secret harmony beginni  
with the loves and memories of her own chi  
hood. There was no need for Lois to interr  
her. She let herself quietly out by  
front door. The sun was already low in  
sky. The sunset light, flooding the str  
recalled two bygone evenings to Lois—t  
after her father's funeral, and that w  
Hans Endberg came walking up the H  
Street with his travelling-bag in his ha  
How lights and shadows will strike a  
the heart! It was high time, then, that  
was with Lydia Calderwood, and she haste  
off.



## CHAPTER IX.

### NEW LIGHTS ON OLD WAYS.

**M**R. PENDLEBURY came back with Peter. He was rather perturbed by his sister's sudden movement, having a rich and easy man's belief in all matters being left to "come about" and "get their edge taken off," forgetful that some things (knives, for instance) are not improved by that change. It was strange to him to return to the old house, at the old hour when he had once returned as a schoolboy, and then as a young clerk proud of new independence. He did not notice the sunshine, as Lois had, but perhaps it served to develop the half-lost images on his heart. And when he went into the parlour and saw the blinds up, and the evening meal set in the remnants of half-forgotten china, he forgot his vexation for a moment and said, "Well, it's really like home, Bab!"

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"That's a good word to begin with, brother," said Miss Pendlebury, cheerily. "And you will forgive me for taking the place by storm, won't you? The housekeeper tempted me to it first, by something she said, and then finding my being here might be useful to the family of that poor man who was hurt to-day, decided me to do it."

"It is not I who am likely to be offended," Mr. Pendlebury answered; "indeed, offended is not the right word to use. But I'm afraid the folks at home will be hurt. They will think you have not cared to see much of them."

"But we shall see each other, I hope, every day for all the rest of my life," she replied; and then qualified the remark with scrupulous sincerity—"at least, we can do so if we like."

Mr. Pendlebury shook his head. "You will find it a stiff pull for your horses to get up to Culstead," he said, "and my wife and the girls do hate this place so. And what is all this about Summers, Barbara? I understand Peter to say something about the woman and her children being here. You will find the British workman's family quite above

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being comforted by the help of a good meal, nowadays. They go to the seaside and own their own houses, and paper and paint them, as I find these very people are doing now. They won't care for your tea and buns. They may come and take them, and then quiz you for wanting to please them and not knowing how to do it. We have all grown independent and enlightened, Barbara."

"Mrs. Summers and her children are to stay here for the night," said Aunt Barbara, glad that she had heard Lois Enticknapp's story before her brother's cynical commentaries. "We telegraphed to her to come home, and she had no place to come to but their dismantled house. So I shall keep her here awhile; and she says she will help me to settle down."

Mr. Pendlebury stood aghast! Fancy a workman's wife receiving telegrams when she could have got a letter by next morning at latest. Cheap and easy telegrams were very convenient when he wanted to let Mrs. Pendlebury know that he should be an hour late for dinner, and he had always felt as if they had become cheap and easy for just such polite purposes.

“Really, Barbara,” he began, scarcely knowing what he meant to say, “I don’t think you quite understand. These people don’t want help. The man gets good wages. They ought to be decently well off. And the unions of theirs prevent them being grateful. You may have been ever so kind to a man one week, but next week he’d have to ask for a rise of wages if his union bade him.”

“Is kindness only for paupers?” she asked quietly. “I’m a rich woman, brother, but wanted help sorely enough when my father lay dead. And these people seem, by what you say, to have employed your good wages in the very best of ways. And as for having to raise a man’s wages after being kind to him, there is no hardship in that, for surely we are kind to people with whom we have neither giving nor paying of wages. A kindness done with half an eye to the matters is only a new and very dangerous form of the truck system.” As she finished, she could not help laughing at her brother’s puzzled face; and she rightly guessed the cause of his bewilderment, remembering the days when she herself had wondered how people could argue so warmly and think

laboriously over such dry subjects as that of her last word, and had herself judged them to be decidedly apart from a woman's province, not then realising that broad principles of justice, mercy, and truth, and all the springs of human tears and laughter, underlie words which seem only fit to head a column in a business newspaper.

Peter easily got his father's consent to remain for the present with Aunt Barbara. Mr. Pendlebury never suggested that his wife might object to that. Peter was rather in the way at Culstead. He was now of an age when a boy has ceased to be a pretty pet, whose impertinences are readily pardoned. Peter had a blunt tongue, and his sisters feared his presence among those whom they wished to impress favourably. His mother was jealous of him for Gilbert's sake. She knew that her darling was a failure in his father's eyes, while Peter, being yet untried, was a prospective success. So, for poor Peter, home discipline meant nothing but "setting down." He was only saved from bitter suffering under this system because it begat in him a contempt for most of the works and ways of his female relatives, which, while thoroughly

wholesome in itself, was utterly unwholesome to be planted where love and honour should have been. His tastes happened to be quite out of tune even with the better tastes of his sister's set. He did not care for their songs and drawings, even as they hated his attempts at engineering and carpentering, and despised his botanical and zoological "specimens." And neither the one nor the other had that patience and modesty which are the true foundations of wide sympathy.

It seems odd that such radically innocent tastes as his should still be in danger of leading him astray. But in the circumstances of his life so it was. Though the stable-boy had as little sympathy as any with Peter's elementary natural science, yet he had a cruel masculine love for "catching things," which made him a ready companion in the boy's long rambles. And though not one of the drunken coachmen, hired and dismissed in rapid succession, cared a straw for Peter's steam-engines and windmills, yet each of them encouraged the lad in working in the coach-house, where he unaccountably lost his tools, and was constantly bewildered as to what had become of his materials. To such

companionship was Peter driven in all those intervals when one must fall back on the resources of one's own establishment. To be sure, he rode with Gilbert when his brother would let him, but that young gentleman had pursuits of his own, from which his ideas of morality dictated that his brother must be excluded for some time to come—a course of conduct on which Gilbert congratulated himself, and thanked God he was not as other men whom he knew. And so poor Peter, the rich man's son, with his face still as fresh and pure as a cherub's might be, was doomed to a terrible familiarity with words and ideas such as those from which good people strive to snatch the children of the gutter.

It argued well for his possessing that soundness of nature which is hard to poison at the root, (though it may be easily defaced,) that Peter was strangely touched by his little lonely aunt's evident attraction towards him. There was no vanity in his feeling. If it could have been put in words it would have been expressed thus:—  
“It is not I whom she likes, but she likes me because I resemble somebody whom she loved. Perhaps I am like what father was when he

was young. He must seem quite a stranger now. If I am like an old friend, it will be pleasant for her to find me friendly." But to himself the lad could only translate his stirring affection in such simple phrases as, "It must be very lonely for her to come here all by herself. And it will be very jolly to help her clearing out and hammering up in that old place."

Thus, suddenly, began Barbara Pendlebury's new life, without any of the plannings and preparations which she had imagined must inaugurate it. Her simple zeal to do the right thing as soon as possible had dropped her into her place without any of the fuss which generally spoils more elaborately organised movements in the right direction. The Perford people did not realise that their mistress had come to remain permanently at the house by the Works until she had actually been there long enough to deprive the fact of all mystery and unnaturalness. In that interval of rumour and uncertainty, the older inhabitants had time to inform the rest that they remembered days when the Pendleburys had no other residence. Down in Church Lane, next door to Mrs. Moffat, lived one who was a great authority on these old times.

Old Dan Chambers was now fighting feebly for a pittance of out-door relief to save him from the workhouse, and his worn wits were sorely exercised to hide the existence of his one luxury—a little dog which had been the pet of an only daughter's long last illness. But old Dan could remember when he had saved stores of gay scraps to bestow on the little "master and missy" on those festive occasions when the "old master" had brought the children to watch the mechanical processes of those days—slow and clumsy processes, out of date now, like poor old Dan himself.

In those times Dan's cousin, the foreman's wife, had been the Pendleburys' sick nurse, and had often "spoken a good word" in behalf of girls desirous of entering their service. Dan could tell how the family washing had been divided between the wives of the two porters, and how the charwoman—that useful factotum, whose helpful presence is often a real charity beyond all payment—had been the wife of a man who had worked hard and honestly between strange fits of wildness and drinking. "He wor a queer fellow!" old Dan would say in his meditative manner; "but old

master never lost patience with him. He knew he was good at heart. 'We must not judge a poor man for what we forgive his betters,' I've heard master say. He had to turn him out once or twice. But between Miss Barbara, as was a slim lass in them days, and the wife, they was always brought together again. But he was sent off for good soon after the old gentleman went to foreig<sup>n</sup> parts for his health. And they had to move out of Perford, and the last I ever saw o' them, the wife was dying on a bit o' old sackin<sup>g</sup>, and he was shut up in prison for half killing <sup>a</sup> policeman. 'It wouldn't have come to this <sup>if</sup> Miss Barbara had been here,' said she to me. And I've never forgot them words."

And old Dan's stories made the old way ~~of~~ life so familiar and natural, that after a day or two the people felt that it was not strange to have a Pendlebury living in Perford—~~it~~ was only strange that none had lived ~~the~~ for so long.





## CHAPTER X.

### THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

**T**was soon very plain that William Summers' sick allowance from his trades-union would only end with the offer of the sum its rules allowed as accident-benefit to its members, when permanently disabled from following their accustomed trade. The cunning right hand still remained, but it would never more be anything but a useless burden, a mere tax on all the rest. Will was always full of cheerfulness and fun during his wife's visits to the hospital, indulging only in comic murmurs, such as, "Why don't they let a fellow keep one hand as clever as the other, instead of teaching him that's bad manners?" But when Miss Pendlebury saw him by herself, she found him grave and thoughtful.

Yet, even to her, he blamed himself for worrying over the future. "Why ma'am, if when I was struck down I could have foreseen things as they are to-day," he would say, "I would have said I could not be ~~thankful~~ enough, and might trust Providence for ~~all~~ the rest. I thought we should soon be at the bottom of everything. But somehow the more one keeps up, the more one wants to keep up. That rascally painter would never have finished off my bit of a house, but for your takin' in the wife and the chicks, so that my trifle of a sick benefit went to pay him off. And if that job had not been done, the house could'nt have been let, as it has been to-day, so that the building society payments can be kept on for the present, which is always so much to the good."

In her talk with both Summers and his wife, at this crisis of their domestic history, Miss Pendlebury became more familiar with the ways and wants, the temptations and ambitions, of working folk, than she might have become in weeks and months of less confidential acquaintance. Mrs. Summers remained her household help. The little children went to their school, and were no trouble

when they came home. Miss Pendlebury could not help feeling that it was indeed a profitable kindness which gave them shelter, while it secured for herself their mother's trustworthiness and neatness, as a stay amid the recklessness of the undisciplined girls who presently volunteered their services.

Yet, as days went on, Aunt Barbara could not fail to see that she had done Mrs. Summers a greater service than she had thought. What were only habits to herself and to such as Lois Enticknapp, were virtues to Mrs. Summers. That little woman had always been a good child, and a good child she remained in her womanhood. Little ways, which are really only means to an end, remained with her as an end. Had she ever been doomed to relax her strict and minute rules of cleanliness and neatness, a real moral loss would have been involved. If she had had to pawn her china, and to cobble up her family garments, in the scanty leisure of rough toil, she would have become a worse woman. If she could not have had a weekly washing-day, she might, in despair, have taken to drink. Does it seem that a character may as well fall at once, as rest on such mean

props? Let us beware what we call common and unclean, and let us look into our hearts. There are few indeed who are strong enough to grasp the Eternal Holiness except standing on some earthly prop. Would you or I be quite the same without your family tradition or my national pride? Have not her flowers heartened this one, and her piano refreshed that? It is only the Lord's great anointed who keep full hold of their own souls, while their garments are parted among the rabble, and no voices but those of insult and mockery greet their ears. The rest of us must be thankful for the little go-carts which help us to totter on the right way, and if the writing of a poem reassures your soul, do not smile if the darn-ing of a stocking reassures another's.

Miss Pendlebury visited Culstead several times before she invited her sister-in-law and nieces to visit her. She expressly requested them to wait until she had fairly set her house in order, so that it might give the girls a truer idea of what life there had once been, and what she meant it to be again. But Peter remained with his aunt even after the first days of strangeness and confusion had passed. His mother did not plead for his return, and his

father, though he said nothing, was pleased to see Peter constantly about the Works, interested in the divers machines, and thereby awakening an intelligent interest in boys who had sometimes done their "minding" with less apparent mind than the wheels and pulleys in their charge; an interest which Mr. Pendlebury knew how to value as a safeguard against costly blunders and breakages.

And day after day Lois Enticknapp saw Lydia Calderwood. She was still in Mrs. Moffat's house, and she had not acted upon her original scheme of seeking work in the factories. She heard of the depression of trade and of the number of "hands" unemployed, and she suggested to Lois that this would not be a fortunate opportunity for an untrained stranger. And Lois was very ready to agree with this. She had never encouraged Lydia's idea. She knew enough of most of the factory women to know what such as poor Lydia had to expect from them. Yet had trade been flourishing, she would not have withheld Lydia from making the trial. She pondered over the matter, and came to the conclusion that the roughest and bitterest

blow from hands equal to giving it, would hurt Lydia less, and damp her courage more lightly, than the warning foreboding of a loving heart. Lydia's little store of money was not yet exhausted, being eked out by payments for needlework which Lois had found for her. Lois kept to her resolution and offered no money for the sewing which she had brought Lydia to beguile the terrible hours after her arrival. Nor did Lois open her own wardrobe to meet the requirement of her who had arrived with no clothes beyond those she wore. Lydia could not bear to go into a shop, and Lois did not refuse to take her money to go shopping for her, and then brought down her own patterns, and helped in the cutting out.

Miss Pendlebury had asked Lois to recommend her a seamstress, and Lois promptly replied that she knew somebody who wanted sewing, and that she herself would be responsible that it should be done well and punctually. She could not yet honestly give Lydia a recommendation, and somehow she would not recommend her to anybody's charity. But she could bear Lydia's burden in her own innocent hands. So she herself carried the

parcels to and fro, and found out the exact market rates, and unflinchingly doled them out though her heart ached to see how hardly they were earned by the poor child's trembling fingers and unaccustomed eyes. She would not charge Miss Pendlebury one farthing more than she would be charged elsewhere, any more than she would offer Lydia's labour cheap, in any quarter where mere cheapness would surmount any other scruple. Neither course would be "fair," and that short word included all Lois's political economy. But nobody was wronged, if she deftly helped the poor girl through the difficulties of her unfamiliar tasks. It was only doing a few button-holes, or putting in a few gussets. Lois remembered when her school-fellows had mocked at the perfection her Quaker mother had required in her needle-work, and had said that such expertness was only needed by those who want "to stitch for their bread." Lois smiled at the remembrance.

Hannah Enticknapp asked no further questions about her daughter's *protégée* than to regularly inquire after her well-being and employment. "Thou canst bring her to see

me whenever thou likest, Lois," she said.  
And Lois answered, "Thank you, mother," and presently crossed the little parlour and kissed her.

"Lois always wanted a brother or a sister," mused the mother. "Whenever her father strove to find out her wishes for her next birth by making her guess what he had brought her that time, she always said first, 'I want a little baby?' And this poor thing has been growing up somewhere all the while! I remember Jacob used to say that the Lord answers no prayers so surely, as those whose answers tarry."

Lois wiled Lydia out for walks. Lydia shrank from the morning hours and the garish sunshine. So Lois called for her as soon as the factories had emptied themselves, their workers, and the streets were comparatively clear. They generally went towards Culstead, for Lydia held the mean Perch Hill streets and the rough Perford people in abhorrence which at first puzzled Lois, almost provoked her. Lois could not find a word to say for the wretched rows of tenements, and the coarsely arranged shambles when once she was fairly challenged to defend

them, and to regard them from another person's point of view. She had not been repelled by their ugliness before. They were full of poor people, striving hard to do their best, and doing wonderfully well, if only all was taken into consideration. Lois did not love the beauties of nature less because she loved the possibilities of human nature more. When she was a little inarticulate infant in Else's arms she had pointed to the sunset. And many a time in her young life had she risen in the twilight of autumn morning and sped away to the high ridge of Culstead Common, to watch the glory of dawn in the sky. Only she wished the Perford people would come out, too, to see it. She had coaxed one or two young working girls into a promise to accompany her, but they had always failed when the morning came.

This ridge on the common was the two girls' favourite goal at that sunset hour which was the earliest at which Lydia could be induced to leave the shelter of Mrs. Moffat's house. Longer distance was beyond her strength. She could put on a wild energy sometimes, and walk farther and faster than Lois herself; but afterwards she would be

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pale and trembling. Lois noticed this, and let no appearance of her own superior strength and endurance tempt Lydia to renew such efforts.

Lois could not wonder at the girl's worn face, nor at the restless nights and ugly dreams of which she told ; for she let Lois see the working of her mind, wildly toiling on among the hardest problems of life. Though such meditations seldom had a direct personal application to Lois's own experience, even she felt the strain of this perpetual algebra, whose  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  were hearts, lives, and destinies. Perhaps Lydia had never heard about the origin of evil, or the law of heredity—probably she had forgotten all she had ever heard of predestination and free-will ; but it was of these things she talked, though she did not use philosophic terms. With her broken heart, and broken life, she was lifting passionate hands to batter at those closed portals, which the purest and wisest and strongest can open only far enough to see that there is light within.

She was not always a pathetic, pleading child. Sometimes she was hard and cold and contemptuous, almost inclined to patronise

Lois as a weak, well-meaning creature. She was not always ready to renew her promise of "being good." Sometimes she seemed desirous of prompting Lois to ask for its repetition, that she might refuse it; but Lois never gave her the chance. Lois never asserted the least right to influence over Lydia. Whenever Lydia got the best of an argument, she freely admitted it, though without admitting that therefore the argument was necessarily closed; and she had her reward, for sometimes Lydia would start an unexpected plea on her side, as a brave warrior, touched by his adversary's moderation, might pick up for him a weapon which he had dropped unnoticed; and once Lydia had said, "I always want you to win, all the while."

It was against the irrevocable that the waves of Lydia's moods chafed most wildly. Why had something gone wrong in her life which could never be set right? For she never denied that. From the very first she took up that position. She never fancied the book of life might pass muster with a stained leaf torn out. For better, for worse, that great sin, that great mistake, must be in everything that the future could bring. And Lois as-

sented ; and Lydia would have hated her if that frank assent, but that Lois's kiss was warm on her forehead when she made it.

" But bright paths are sometimes entered by dark doors," said Lois.

" I'm not sure I'd care for what you would think brightness," Lydia answered. " I don't think I care for being a martyr or a saint. I should like to have a home and pleasant people belonging to me. Yes, and I should like to have some fun and some nice dresses. I don't feel to crave for these things now, because I'm dull and worn out ; but I hope I shan't be ~~ever~~ always. I don't believe there is any harm in these things. God made them, as well as everything else."

" Certainly He did, and they are all very good," said Lois, calmly.

" Then why did He make my life so that I couldn't get them without doing what people call wrong—what is wrong, I suppose ?" asked Lydia.

" It strikes me sometimes," said Lois, " that God has not made the world yet—that He is still making it ; and it strikes me that He has called all of us His children to help Him in His work, and that some of us are idle and

some of us do wrong, and that God Himself will have to combine and finish off everything before it will be at all according to His will."

"I should have never known you if I had not gone wrong," said Lydia.

"We cannot be sure of that," Lois answered; "or you might have found somebody far better whom you will miss now."

"Still, knowing you is a good, and is, anyhow, a good that came out of evil," Lydia **Persisted**.

"You found me when you were trying your **utmost** to get right," Lois replied.

"But what is evil, after all?" Lydia would ask. "Here, in this England, I am a fallen woman; but one like me would be of the purest on a South Sea island. There are deeds which the very best people did, and thought virtuous, only two or three hundred years ago, but which very ordinary people now would never think of doing. Do you suppose that even you—you who are so good," she said with that strange half-mockery of hers, "that even you are not doing something which your grandchildren will condemn?"

"I hope I am," answered Lois, meekly. "I

hope the world will get on, as it always has done. I think evil is when we do what we know is wrong, or what we ought to know is wrong. I think the light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world will always show clearly enough for the place he is in. If each of us follows the best light he has, that will never lead to evil. It will guide him upward, though as yet he may be only scrambling out of the ditch."

"But after all, I cannot see what great wrong I did," said Lydia in the hard tone which made Lois's heart sink within her. "I never loved but one. I gave myself wholly to him as much as if I was his wife."

Lois knit her arm in Lydia's. "Are you quite sure you loved him at all?" she said gently. "You were lonely, and he seemed a friend—you were wretched, and he brought relief. I don't say you didn't love him, Lydia; but if you had loved him enough, you would have died to save him from sinning. That is what the greatest love does."

Lydia shook away her clasping hand, but not before Lois felt her whole frame quiver with the passionate sob she had learned to

know so well. "Was loving me such desperate sinning?" she cried. "Was it a sin to love me because I was a nobody and poor? He said it was his salvation to know me."

"My darling," said Lois, again grasping the trembling arm, "it was no sin to love you. I should not have wondered if he had loved you. But did he? Was it love to doom you to such error and anguish? If he had loved you right, his one yearning would have been to unit your destinies together, so that no man or circumstance could part you."

"He knew nothing would part me!" sobbed Lydia.

"Perhaps not," said Lois: "but if you had loved him enough, you would not have let him in by offering you a love not worthy to match with your own. You would have watched over his honour so jealously that you would not have let him lose it by deceiving you. Do you think that you felt, at the time, that you were doing the very best you knew, Lydia?"

"I did not think about it," Lydia murred. "I only could not bear to think of losing—him! I can't wonder at what I did, looking back at it even now," she said

with more calmness. "You cannot tell how unutterably dreary my life was. It was bad enough to bear when I knew nothing better; but how could I go on with it after I knew how it felt to have kind words spoken to one, and a pleasant object to live for through the miserable day? And yet, between then and now, Miss Enticknapp," and she lowered her voice and bent her head near Lois's shoulder, "there have been many times when I have longed even for the dull schoolroom and peace, and when a civil word from some stranger—perhaps some stupid, commonplace woman like my old employer—has seemed like balm to me, with its reassurance that the stamp of outcast was not actually branded on my face. I always felt as if it was when I was with him. And he spoke to me so terribly sometimes. He said something awful to me only a day or two before he went away."

"Do you care to tell me what it was?" Lois inquired, very gently.

"He said that he had always been cynical enough about women, but that he should have twenty times more so since he had seen what an easy conquest could be made of such a demure little puss as I had seemed when he

first saw me." She spoke with averted face.

"And he had said it was salvation to know you?" said Lois. "Well may Paul warn us not to do evil that good may come!"

Lydia spoke now in a whisper so low that Lois could scarcely catch her words. "Do you think," she asked, "that our lives are somehow linked together? I know, of course, that we can neither of us be as if we had never met; but I mean more than that. Have we to meet again? Is it possible, do you think, that the one may somehow feel when the other is miserable or wicked? Do you think we shall ever come across the same people, or be near each other without knowing it?"

Lois felt her heart throb with the consciousness that, in Lydia's wild, half-aimless pilgrimage to Perford, she had actually doubled on the track of him who had so wronged her. Lydia had never told Lois the episode of the two children on the sea-shore, and she had never chanced to meet the Summers' children in Perford. She had only said that she had heard of Perford casually, as a place full of factories and working people. We are reticent about the

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oracles through which Divine impulses reach us, perhaps because we are partly aware of their frequent inadequacy to explain the power over us.

For herself, Lois was quite ready to admit many mysteries underlying life—nay, for much the same sort of awed interest there which young travellers feel in the catacombs. But the terrors of these unexplored regions were not to be encountered by this poor rack-brain, to whose fevered fancy every whirring bat might seem a weird hobgoblin. The sisters must not explore mines ; they must sit in the sunshine. Therefore, instead of directly answering Lydia, Lois only said cheerfully, “ I do not think God means us to harp on the past. The present will be the past soon : we can only take care to have nothing to regret then. Perhaps we should never think of our old sins and sorrows except when the thought will help us to save others from what we have gone through. And now I want to repeat to you some lovely lines which I read the other day, and which made me feel as if the sun was shining, though it happened to be such a dull afternoon.”

And then she repeated in her clear, even voice,—

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"To care for others that they may not suffer  
What we have suffered, is divine well-doing,  
The noblest vote of thanks for all our sorrows.  
Thus I have seen a lame and halting child  
Prop up most tenderly a broken plant,  
And a poor mother, whose own child was burnt,  
Snatch from the flame the children of another.  
So, generous heart, return more constant thanks  
For all thy griefs to God and to mankind,  
And ending grief will make unending joy."

Lois's true feeling made her a perfect reciter, though she did not know it. "A German wrote that," she said. "A good man who lived a quiet life. I've heard people say that his philosophy would be worth more if he had known harder paths himself. But I think people cannot always understand a life by its story. A man may only give his biographers the dates of birth and success and marriage, but he may have other dates graven on his heart." And Lois gave half a sigh, thinking of that night when Lydia had sought refuge in the shop, and wondering how she had really felt in those days—already seeming so far away—when she had gone on lonely rambles, her mind busy with no problems more intricate than whether her last worn dress would make two little frocks for some widow's child, or what book she should choose to lend to

some sick neighbour in hospital—no reverie—more exciting than those over some fond word in Hans Endberg's last letter, or some vision of her future home in Germany. It had been so easy then to feel that God is good and that life is a blessing. “But if all ends well now—,” said Lois to herself—“and if it does not, perhaps it will be through some fault of my own—then I shall feel God's goodness, and life's worth, ten times more than I could before !”





## CHAPTER XI.

### TWO GUILELESS GIRLS.

**S**PRING changed to summer, and then summer wore away. Miss Pendlebury did not see very much of her sister-in-law and nieces. They came to the old house, and said how "gloomy" it was, and then they left the flowers blooming and the fruit ripening around their Culstead home, and hired a house in a big fashionable seaside town. They hired one of the best houses there, where nothing intercepted the sea view, except, first, a drive crowded by carriages and equestrians ; second, a promenade thronged with loungers ; and third, a stand of bathing machines. They wrote scrawling letters to Aunt Barbara, telling her how "jolly" they were, and wondering how she could endure the "dulness" of her home.

Aunt Barbara had been so long a dweller in

tents, had seen so much of earth, and sea and sky, with the shadow of a great anxiety hanging over them all, that she was fain to stay in her new habitation and rest her heart upon the tamer beauties to be found within a short distance thereof. She went with the Pendlebury workpeople on their annual excursion to Collinge Abbey, and those whose pleasure was to get drunk, and to shout music-hall songs, did not enjoy themselves so well that year, but the sober folk who could relish strawberries and cream, and good old glee-singing, enjoyed themselves far better, and the cricket was more creditable than usual.

Will Summers was able to go with his wife and children to that excursion. He had come out of hospital, and the whole family were again in their own little home. It was to be roughly their own now, for Miss Pendlebury and Will had taken counsel together, and they had come to the decision that the accident benefit could not be better applied than to clearing off the debt to the building society, so that they might live rent free for the rest of their days. In the time of their prosperity they had never taken a lodger, Mrs. Summers having a born country-woman's longing

"peace and quietness." But now they had found one to occupy their best bedroom. He was a quiet, unassuming youth, who came up to the good woman's standard of "a gentleman whom it was a pleasure to wait upon." He was only a junior clerk at the Works, but, as the son of a poor curate, he might have shrunk from the possibilities he would have associated with the home of "a workman's wife," but quite different ideas were suggested when the son of the head of the firm recommended Mrs. Summers as "the nice person who had been house-keeping for my aunt." Mrs. Summers still remained the presiding genius of Aunt Barbara's kitchen, the censor of its morals, the check upon its wastefulness, its standard of public opinion. She spent some hours there every day, and then she carried home the household mendings and the lighter washings. Aunt Barbara got her an appointment (for which she herself paid), as teacher of stocking knitting and darning at Perford Charity School. And thus provided with roof and daily bread, Will could bear to wait and grow strong until he might hear of work suitable for him—an able man yet, in spite of his dead hand. It was wonderful what a soft bloom stole back to his

poor wife's pale cheek, and how much strength and energy she developed. Else Beck said it was because she had left off thinking of herself. Miss Pendlebury thought it might be caused by the wholesome presence of people who appreciated her little virtues, instead of those who mocked and mistrusted them. Lois Enticknapp said—and a strange wistfulness came to her eyes as she said it—"She has found that everlasting strength begins where mortal strength has failed."

It was during those late summer days that Lydia Calderwood first went to work in Miss Pendlebury's house. Lydia's little store was fast diminishing, and still the utter stagnation of trade made it absurd for an unskilled stranger to offer herself for employment for which scores of trained hands were held out. Lois had kept her fairly supplied with needlework, from one quarter or another. Yet the payment for ten or twelve hours' daily toil would not have maintained her without a supplement of shilling or two from her little capital. And Lydia would say bitterly, "If I had done what I ought, I should have thrown all that money into the sea, as I did my deceitful wed-  
ding ring, and then I must have starved, an-

hat would have been the best thing for me; and so doing right would have brought me the solution of all my difficulties."

Miss Pendlebury took it into her head that she would like all her new household linen marked in the dainty, elaborate fashion still visible on the fragments of her ancestral napery. She wanted to do a little of it herself, and she wanted to plan a great deal of it; for, in fact, Aunt Barbara's housekeeping sat a little freshly upon her, and she was inclined to be notable, and very exact about her pickling and preserving. Mrs. Summers knew nothing of any needlework but the plainest. Aunt Barbara had heard that it was a young girl who did the sewing which Lois superintended, and she asked Lois point-blank if that same young girl would come to her house and put herself under her direction for a certain weekly wage, which she knew would at once save poor Lydia's hand from any further wasting. The two girls conferred together, and Lydia accepted the offer.

Miss Pendlebury was strongly fascinated by Lydia's white face, with its big brown eyes, and it had also the enduring charm of an unloved puzzle. She felt as if she had seen it

before—nay, more, as if it had previous ~~ly~~  
stirred her heart into tender yearning. Yet ~~in~~  
answer to her questions, Lydia said she ~~was~~ a  
stranger in Perford, an orphan, and had ~~nev~~er  
been out of England. Again and again, ~~Miss~~  
Pendlebury fancied she had almost seized ~~the~~  
floating memory, but it always eluded her ~~grasp~~,  
and left only a distinct recollection of her ~~own~~  
mood in connection with it.

Aunt Barbara found it hard to make friends  
with the little pale creature who came ~~and~~  
worked in her parlour, and was so apt and ~~obe~~  
dient. She could see that she was well-bred,  
and it was easy to imagine some reverse of ~~for~~  
tune of which she never spoke, which perhaps  
accounted for a shyness that was almost ~~wild~~.  
There was no reason why she should probe ~~this~~  
sensitive heart, which seemed to shrink ~~even~~  
from a glance, for Aunt Barbara knew it ~~was~~  
safe in the wholesome friendship of Lois ~~En~~  
ticknapp. At the time when Lydia's work ~~for~~  
the day would be done, Lois would ~~look~~  
in at the house by the Works and confer ~~with~~  
Miss Pendlebury about any little business ~~con~~  
cerning the sick and suffering in Perford, ~~and~~  
then take Lydia with her for an evening ~~walk~~.  
So Aunt Barbara attempted no confidence ~~with~~

lydia, but rested content with lending her books, giving her flowers and fruit, and presenting her with sundry trifles of simple cambric or crochet with which to brighten her worn, lain gowns.

And now chill days of autumn were shortening overhead, and the Pendleburys had returned from the seaside ; and the prospects of Perford seemed to grow darker and colder with the weather. Mr. Pendlebury had suggested that two or three of his older workmen might be turned off altogether : the hair of one was quite white, and the other had taken to spectacles ; and in this slack time, one might as well get rid of those whose work was most likely to be not quite worth their wage. He had tried to silence his sister's remonstrances, by saying that they had belonged to trades-unions, and would be provided for by their superannuation fund. But Miss Pendlebury had made acquaintance with these men and their families, and she knew how one was providing for two orphan nephews till they should be old enough to provide for themselves, which they would be in a year or two ; and that the other was saving every penny to pay for his passage to

New Zealand, to join a widowed daughter who wanted him to help her with a shop which was beginning to thrive, but who could not yet afford to send him means for the costly voyage. And Aunt Barbara saved from blight these last ambitions of two industrious lives, both worthy in the main, though the good uncle swore a little sometimes, and the beloved father had an unlimited store of conceit and dogmatism. Mr Pendlebury had to yield to his "unbusiness like partner's prejudices." When, a few week later, the stagnation of affairs so increased that even Aunt Barbara sorrowfully own it might be a false policy not to dismiss some workpeople, and when a rumour that effect percolated among them, it was that very uncle who came, cap in hand, the head of the firm, and respectfully suggested that the same result might be achieved by everybody's working-day being shortened one hour. "Among a hundred of us," said he with a pause, where in other company such habit would have introduced an oath, "among a hundred of us, starvation divides into short commons."

Miss Pendlebury's heart ached to think o-

the increase of suffering which must come when coal, candle, and warm clothing would be demanded by severe weather. Aunt Barbara was not Quixotic: she did not wish to save her people from the natural consequences of improvident habits, of overcrowded trades, of stagnant resignation: she knew that to avert such natural consequences would be but like suppressing disease instead of curing it, merely to bring about a more violent and deadly crisis. But she felt that these people had no right to suffer alone—to bear by themselves the burden of a community which had shared in their prosperity. And further, Aunt Barbara had a secret belief that though Personal kindness must not interfere with Political economy, as a mother must not interrupt the punishment tasks of her boy, yet that even as she may so help him in his lessons that the punishment tasks are not needed, so may personal kindness prevent the setting of those dreadful problems which political economy can only solve by a wholesale holocaust of the innocent.

What could she do? She had no right to take everything upon herself. It would be better for her brother and his family, and

better for the workpeople, if they could only mutually believe, on ever such slight foundation, that they had some fellowship one with the other. Peter had already made a beginning, which would help the people to believe in the good intentions of his sisters. So one day, when she met her brother stepping from his carriage, she bade him carry to his wife and daughters an invitation to spend the afternoon of the next day at the house by the Works, as she wanted to consult with them concerning some plans for the ensuing winter.

"They have already arranged to come to you this afternoon," said Mr. Pendlebury. "They have some news for you, with which they particularly requested me not to forestall them. A man is not more delighted to be first in the market," he added "than is a woman to be first with her news."

Afternoon duly brought the ladies, but they were not alone. Kate Pride accompanied them. They had called upon the Prides on their way to Perford, and Kate, hearing they were going on to their Aunt Barbara's, had asked to accompany them to pay her first visit to that lady. Mrs. Pendlebury had joyfully consented, and had then four

that she had better send back the footman for her daughters' cloaks ; also, though that she did not make public, to deliver a note to her son Gilbert, bidding him call for them at the house by the Works, as, after all, that might be the most favourable opportunity to say good-bye to his Aunt Barbara, for Gilbert was going to Germany for the winter. Mrs. Pendlebury said within herself, that if Kate saw Gilbert surrounded by the pathos of parting, and Gilbert carried away a vision of Kate mingled with home memories, each might like the other better than they had done hitherto. "Plebeian Pride" might have once looked higher for his daughter, but, from rumours one heard, he was now so nervous about penniless curates, tutors, &c., that he would accept any moderately rich man's son as a much less evil. Mrs. Pendlebury felt that this little scheme was an act of Christian self-sacrifice, for she could not imagine Kate would be a very tame and tractable daughter-in-law. "She will take my son from me," said Mrs. Pendlebury within herself,—"but if it is for his good!"

"And now, my dear Barbara," she began aloud, "we have come to receive your con-

gratulations. We could not let you hear anything from anybody but our very selves—not even from papa. You were the first person darling Fanny remembered in her happiness" (that was true: Fanny had observed, "Old Aunt Bab won't be pleased; old maids are always spiteful over marriages"). "You are the first person who has heard anything about it—except, of course, Miss Pride, who is such an old familiar neighbour that we think of her as one of ourselves; you understand, Barbara."

Aunt Barbara looked from one to the other mystified. It was Fanny's name which had been mentioned, but it was Emma who was blushing. Her mother's allusion to Kate Pride as "one of ourselves" was really too much for the romantic admirer of Kate's brother, Captain Jack.

"I am sure you will be gratified, Barbara," Mrs. Pendlebury went on. "Everything is so suitable and so pleasant! Congratulate me on the prospect of having Doctor Weston as my son-in-law—as Fanny's husband! I always thought he admired her, though I believed she was indifferent to him; but the sad sea-waves told the young people the state of each other's hearts!"

"I hope Fanny will be very happy," said Aunt Barbara seriously. "I shall be glad of an early opportunity of knowing more of Doctor Weston."

"You will be charmed with him," Mrs. Pendlebury assured her. "He is not sceptical about anything, like some doctors, but is a good Church member, though his immense practice does not allow him to attend many services. A large and increasing practice, dear Barbara—a Culstead practice—solely among wealthy and important people."

"Look at our engagement ring, aunt," said Fanny, holding out a hand which did not tremble. "Is it not a love? Look at the size of the diamonds—and they are all of the first water!"

Aunt Barbara looked, and she said nothing, but drew down her niece's face and kissed her. A dumb caress may mean either tenderest pride or gentlest pity.

"He is behaving most nobly!" Mrs. Pendlebury resumed. "He mentioned settlements himself, and Fanny is to have her own carriage for her private use. They go into the very best society, these Westons; and, to

own the truth, it is natural, as the daughter of a professional man, that I should rejoice that my child is to be the wife of one."

Aunt Barbara was silent, and wop within herself how some people would good breeding and politeness, and yet m to justify the very words and deeds by they claim them.

"There will be no delay about the marriage," the mother went on. "It will be early spring—as soon as the house is fitted up to receive Fanny."

"We are to have oak carving and blue and brass fittings, and decorative painting all the proper sort of thing," said F. "I don't care much for them, but they are in fashion just now."

And Aunt Barbara thought how terrible is when the scenery overbalances the drama which calls it into existence. Better that the drama be played on bare boards before a sackcloth curtain!

"How dull this room is!" said F. "Aunt, how can you endure it, day after day?"

"I find it cheerful enough for me," Pendlebury answered. "Its dead silence

shadowiness seem only restful. But, Fanny, just now darkness should be sunshiny to you, and dead walls bright with pleasant pictures."

"I don't gush!" said Fanny.

"What a queer way you have of putting things, love!" observed her mother. "I don't believe what she says. Nevertheless, Barbara, I believe it increases one's chance of happiness not to enter life with too romantic notions. Whoever looks forward to an Eden will be disappointed!"

"I don't expect too much," said Fanny. "I have always thought that married life seems to get tame enough after a while; and if one has children, one is in a fright for fear one's daughters don't marry as well as other women's; and one always hates one's sons' wives; and I feel no ambition for patriarchal pleasures!"

"I wonder you get married at all, then," sneered Gilbert, who had just come in, and was shaking hands with his aunt and Miss Pride.

"It is only better than being single," she said. "And after one is married there seems nothing to do but to grow old; and I don't believe anybody likes to grow old. They

pretend to think it is very fine, because they cannot help it."

"You need not think of being old for a long time, Fanny," said her mother; "and you are like me, darling—one of those who wear well."

Mrs. Pendlebury believed that she looked very young. How could it be otherwise, she asked herself, when her hair had no streak of grey, and her forehead no line? Yet dolls grow old, though they neither turn grey nor wrinkle; and though Mrs. Pendlebury did not know it, she was popularly asserted to wear a wig—but that was a mistake.

"You are holding quite a levee this afternoon, Aunt Bab," said Gilbert, with that affectation of easy familiarity which he thought charming. "Why don't you have all your visitors in one room?"

"So they are," asserted Aunt Barbara.

"Did I not see a young lady in the front parlour as I passed its open door?" he said.

"Oh, she comes here every day," explained Miss Pendlebury; "she is helping me with my domestic needlework."

"Ha! a needlewoman!" interrupted Mrs. Pendlebury; "Fanny, a useful person for you

come across just now. Where did you find r, Barbara ? We can never get a thing ne decently. Of course we shall get most Fanny's trousseau direct from London, but is very handy to know of somebody who ll come in by the day and help with some the plainer things. If she is a Perford rson, she ought to make very low charges it now, when all the people there are crying t for charity."

"This is a well-educated girl, who works autifully," said Miss Pendlebury, with that iet tone which, to Kate Pride's sensitive r, was itself a reproof to Mrs. Pendlebury's fish clatter. "I heard of her from Miss Enticknapp, whose friend she is."

"What ! the friend of that pretty Qua-ress who sometimes serves in the baker's op beside the church, eh ?" said Gilbert, with curious laugh.

"The friend of my friend Lois Entick-pp," said Miss Pendlebury calmly, looking r nephew full in the face till his bold eyes fell. "Are things so very bad in Perford, Miss ndlebury ?" asked Kate Pride, feeling that subjects hitherto under discussion might w be safely dropped.

“Very, very bad indeed!” answered Aunt Barbara earnestly. “If you had not come to-day,” she went on, turning to her niece: “I was going to send for you, for I have some plans in which I should like your help, or at least your interest.”

“I shall be able to make you up a charity bundle of old clothes,” said Fanny; “I’m afraid that’s all I can do. I shall want a good deal of the money I can get for myself, though papa has given me a hint that I can draw on him pretty extensively, as it will be for the last time.”

“Between Fanny’s marriage and Gilbert’s travels there will be frightful calls on our income this year,” sighed Mrs. Pendlebury. “And we must not economise over our bride or keep Gilbert at home at the very time of life for enjoyment, just because times are hard for the moment. I’ve made Mr. Pendlebury see that at last,” she added, drawing a long breath, like one fatigued with labour.

“I do not think money is what I need most or first,” said Aunt Barbara; “I want personal help. I want to have some little plans whereby we shall get to know the people, and so find out how they can best

tided over their difficulties. It takes several people to make acquaintance with so many, and youth draws best to youth. Already some of the lads are coming here for one evening out of the week to look through Peter's microscope, and we all get quite friendly while we are hearing about the wonders he shows us. I think we might manage something of the same sort for the girls, as well as some cosy kind of meeting for the elder people; and thus we shall get them all under our eyes, and no special suffering can escape our notice."

"Ah, and they may learn a little more of the duties of their station at the same time," said Mrs. Pendlebury. "When I was a girl I was one of the lady visitors at a young woman's meeting, and we took turns at reading them Scripture lessons, and sometimes a nice story about a servant. I should think something of this sort would do the boys more good than Peter's microscope. I dare say they can hardly read or write."

"They can all read and write a little, at least," said Aunt Barbara; "and I think the best way to improve them is to let them find what interest there is in books. I don't

think you quite catch my idea, sister. Neither I nor these girls of yours have a right to fancy ourselves qualified to teach others, because we have a little more money than they have, but we each have a right to try to be friendly and helpful to those whom God has placed in relation with us. I am not thinking of inviting the work-girls to these meetings for two or three weeks yet, and in the meantime I wish my nieces, or at any rate Emma, would come here once a week, for the evening, to meet any other young ladies that we may ask to join us, so that we may discuss our little plans, get to know each other, and learn how to work together."

"Will you let me come to?" asked Kate Pride, bending forward her beautiful dark face and speaking eagerly, as if the answer mattered to her a great deal.

"Certainly!" answered Aunt Barbara warmly, "and I am glad you volunteered, for I should scarcely have known whether I was right to invite an only daughter."

A shadow passed over Kate's face.

"I shall be able to come nearly always," she said; "not quite regularly, perhaps, but when I fail you will know it must be for

unavoidable cause. I should not take  
it as an amusement," she added, with a  
reserve of bitterness; "I have enough  
ment; I want duty, work! Only I  
did anything of this sort before," she  
n hastily, as if she thought Aunt Bar-  
night reclaim her invitation, "I know  
g——"

ou know how to be yourself, my dear,"  
unt Barbara with a touch of tender-  
n her manner. "As for the rest,  
ill soon learn. You will meet Lois  
napp, who has lived among these very  
all her days, and who will talk about  
till you feel that you have done so

it you won't ask this Enticknapp girl  
ne here for your introductory evenings  
your lady-helpers, sister Barbara?" said  
Pendlebury. "An excellent person,  
ess, and will be most useful when the  
ork begins, and it will be an honour to  
be joined in it; but one must draw the  
omewhere. She is a little shopkeeper's  
ter."

nd I am a big shopkeeper's daughter,"  
ate Pride serenely. Whenever she said

what the Pendleburys called "her queer sayings," she looked happy and vigorous.

"My dear!" shrieked Mrs. Pendlebury, "do not confuse things. Who would compare your papa—a merchant-prince, whose transactions require as much head and organization as many a little continental government with a petty shopkeeper, counting pennies?" Fugh! there is something sordid and grovelling in the thought."

"My father began with a little shop and little profits," said Kate recklessly, looking straight before her, with a touch of flame on either cheek. "If he had not loved money so much, and sought after it so keenly, he would be a poor shopkeeper still. Do you know, Mrs. Pendlebury, I would rather be standing behind the old counter in Perforated, honestly selling calico at a halfpenny profit on the yard, to pay me for my trouble in bringing the bale from London, than be living off the 'great transactions' which are too many and too intricate for their strict honesty and wholesomeness to be thoroughly looked into."

"My dear, I think you are not speaking very dutifully," said Mrs. Pendlebury, in a soothing tone which ill disguised a sneer.

“Dutifully!” echoed Kate. She had risen from her chair, and she was the tallest woman in the room and as straight as an arrow, and she clenched her gloved hand beside her as she spoke. “Dutifully!” she repeated in a softer tone. “It is because I dearly love my father that I hate what is called his great success, and all the misery that it has caused him.”

It seemed impossible to return to any ordinary conversation after that outburst. Aunt Barbara thought it might be best to break up the circle; so she suggested that Peter should take his brother and sisters and Miss Pride into the garden to see the chrysanthemums, and show them what gardening could be done even in Perford.

“Oh, Barbara!” said Mrs. Pendlebury as soon as the young people had gone, “you can’t tell how a mother feels when the first of her children gets settled in life. And I really have had my fears for dear Fanny, though I kept them entirely to myself. I had always dreaded an attachment between her and our vicar’s youngest son, a ne’er-do-well wandering kind of young man, who did not care to go to college, and took employment under

all sorts of foreign merchants, to make ~~an~~ excuse for going tramping about the world, picking up all sorts of rubbishing curiosities. Many a time have I said to Fanny, 'Thomas Lee's wife will have to live in a caravan, and in the morning he will take out a pocketful of money, and at night he will bring her home a pocketful of stones.' She always would let him come about her, so that I lived in daily dread of hearing it reported that they were engaged; and I believe they would have been so, if I had not had the tact to keep perfectly quiet and to rouse no antagonism. And when Fanny and I were exchanging confidences over her engagement I could not help saying to her, 'My dear, I always prayed it should not be Thomas Lee. And I saw she changed colour a little, and she said, 'I can't say I love Dr. Weston and I have loved Thomas Lee, but Thomas Lee I would never have married.' And I said, 'Bless you, my darling, for your wisdom! and you will get your reward.'"

What could Aunt Barbara say? She felt stunned. To what could she appeal in a woman who could say she had prayed that her child should not marry the man she

loved ; who could prophesy that she would get her reward for not doing so ? Aunt Barbara seemed to hear an echo of those words with a solemn emphasis ; but before she could utter even one protest Mrs. Pendlebury went on again—

“ And, my dear Barbara, you really must give way to me about that Enticknapp girl. Kate Pride does not know what she is talking about. I am not saying anything against the girl ; I dare say she is well enough, but see what these people are exposed to. You heard the way in which Gilbert spoke of her ; and, standing in a public shop, she cannot help anybody going in to buy a trifle and make an excuse to speak to her. The association of ideas is unpleasant.”

Aunt Barbara laughed, though there was a little bitterness in the laughter. “ I know Lois Enticknapp and I know my nephew,” she said—she spared Mrs. Pendlebury by not saying “ your son.” “ There is a Chinese saying, that the foolish, scoffing at virtue, is like one who looks up and spits at heaven : the action soils not heaven, but defiles himself. Gilbert had to speak of Lois in her shop, as he would have to speak of a prin-

cess in her carriage. He would never be able to speak of her as a friend, as probably many young men of his description can speak of your Fanny and Emma. And as for the idea of degradation in her having to say, 'Yes,' or 'No,' to an unworthy customer, do you remember that, according to your code of polite etiquette, your girls at their parties, if not previously engaged, must not refuse to dance with a man whom they may know to be utterly bad, even fresh from the mud of the divorce court?"

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Pendlebury, "all these high moral views are very fine—quite right, of course; but we must take ~~the~~ world as we find it. It is hard enough ~~work~~ to keep pace with it, without trying to reform it. And I'm afraid his father has said ~~some~~ thing to prejudice you against dear ~~Gilbert~~. You have heard that he is going to ~~Germany~~, of course? And he has come to say a ~~quiet~~ good-bye to you to-day. He hopes to ~~see~~ you again before he goes, of course, but ~~that~~ may be in a crowd. Gilbert admires ~~you~~ wonderfully, Barbara, though he always ~~affectionately~~ affects the cool manner young men have nowadays. Do you know, I think he resembles ~~you~~ per-

ially, making allowance for the difference age and sex. But here he comes, and he ist not hear us speaking of him, dear fellow."

"Can you stay with me for the evening, iss Pride?" asked Aunt Barbara, as the rty came in from the garden. "Perhaps

Mrs. Pendlebury passes your house she ll leave word that you have remained here, d that you can drive home a little later. you like, we will go and call on the En- knapps. I think you would like to see em in their own house."

"Oh, how I should like to go too!" said nma, with an appealing glance at her mother, Kate eagerly consented.

"You shall come with me another time, nma," answered her aunt. She understood r nieces well enough to realise that their esence might spoil the higher influences to nich Kate was susceptible. We owe a duty idiots, but it is not our duty to strive to elop them in places and times when genius waiting for instruction.

"Only I should like to go with Kate," ped Emma. "And if we plan any visita- on among the poor, let me go with Kate, nt." Emma had fanciful superstitions ; and

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she fancied that it was a good omen that Kate should have come with them to announce her sister's engagement.

"But I am only a shopkeeper's daughter," said Kate, with a roguish mockery, "so I expect Lois Enticknapp and I will have to pair off together."

"And now good-bye, aunt," said Gilbert, taking both Miss Pendlebury's hands in his. "Good-bye. May I, on returning, find you still enjoying your delicious home, and the delightful people that you are likely to gather under its roof."

Gilbert possessed his face so thoroughly while he spoke, that Aunt Barbara could not tell whether he meant to be impudent or was only false.

"Oh, what a relief to get away!" cried Fanny, as the carriage door closed on the family. "I would never go there at all if I could help it. What in the name of wonder will she give me for a wedding present?"

"A family Bible or a tea-kettle," suggested Gilbert. "While we are about it we may as well get it good. Who will give her a hint about black letter or Nankin blue?"

"Whatever your aunt does she will do

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handsomely," said Mrs. Pendlebury impressively. "But I'm afraid she is not as thoughtful as she might be. She might have reflected that young men are often kept very closely by their fathers. A rich old maid like her might have been proud to give such a nephew as you a fifty-pound note to take on his trip."

"She'll keep her notes to give dowries to her *protégées*," said Gilbert; "and some of them will want them. Is not the old girl getting taken in? Would not her hair stand on end if she knew what I could tell her about the pretty creature sewing in the parlour!"

All the ladies cried out. But though he proceeded to define poor Lydia's history, with a severity of term for which full authority should have been demanded, nobody inquired as to his sources of information. The girls exclaimed, the mother alternately asked him questions and bade him be silent, only observing at last—

"And I might have hired a creature like that to work for me—to spend days under the same roof with my two guileless girls!"



## CHAPTER XII.

### A PERFOR'D INTERIOR.

**M**ISS PENDLEBURY and Kate were still sipping their tea from the same old Chelsea cups, which the former remembered as the anxious admiration of the high days and holidays of her youth, when Lois Enticknapp herself was announced. She had come to report to Aunt Barbara about the real state of things with old Dan Chambers, of whose memories, fears, and ambitions that lady had heard for the first time the day before. Also Lois intended to carry off Lydia to pass the evening in her own home, where she was often welcomed now, though kind Hannah Enticknapp and her old servant discreetly left her but little noticed.

But when Aunt Barbara saw Lois she excused that she and her guest were just

starting to pay a visit to Lois's mother, and why should they be baulked of that pleasure, because Lois herself could now conduct them there? "Why, indeed!" Lois answered gaily, always ready to throw herself into any little scheme of kindness and joy. But when she turned to smile upon the visitor, the smile died on her face, and there swept over it the white rigidity which Miss Pendlebury remembered at their first introduction, but which she had almost forgotten in the geniality she had since learned to love.

"Shall I find Lydia in the parlour? I wish to speak a word with her," she said, in a manner which, in anybody else, would have seemed haughtiness, but which, in sweet Lois Enticknapp, was only unutterably strange and stiff.

"Yes, you will, and it is quite time that she put away her work," answered Miss Pendlebury; and Lois arose and went, swiftly and silently, with none of the smiles and gestures with which we are accustomed to round off our entrances and exits.

"You must not judge of her for awhile," said Miss Pendlebury to Kate. "She was like this when I first met her. Is it some

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lingering survival of Quaker coolness and reserve, or is it merely the effect of a stranger's presence? She seems to freeze."

"But if she does," said Kate; "it is into frozen roses."

And Lois went slowly towards the parlour. A great responsibility had fallen upon her, and her heart trembled. When a dear one lies in deadly danger, which of us would not, if he could, postpone the crisis which must either restore joy or slay hope? Which of us would not crave one more day's respite, if, haply, its sunshine or breeze may bring a little more strength for the wrestle on whose issues so much depends?

Only the last time she had seen Lydia the girl had spoken bitterly, as if her doom was harder than she could bear. Lois's faith and courage did not fail; but Lydia's fits of despair began to shake her nerve. A tainted air will poison the strongest man who repeatedly enters it, because at each essay it saps his resisting power.

And Lois stood quite still outside the parlour door, and asked herself, "What can be the will of God?" And she answered in her heart, "His judgments need not make haste,

and His thunderbolts fly better on His own wind than from human artillery. While I can spare Lydia, I think I may." And then she went in.

"Lydia," she said, "Miss Pendlebury and a friend of hers wish to visit my mother to-night. Perhaps you will not care to come?"

"Certainly not!" Lydia answered. "I think I am able to amuse myself for one evening."

Lois was still stunned by the terror which had fallen upon her. Otherwise her sensitive sympathy would have detected the edge in Lydia's voice. As it was, she felt this was a good opportunity for proving to Lydia that she could now trust her with herself, which Lydia had more than once passionately accused her of being unable to do. So she only bade her a cheerful good night and kissed her, and hastened away, lest any awkward question or remark might rise.

By the time Aunt Barbara and Kate had donned their bonnets and mantles, Lois was herself again, or, as Kate whispered to Miss Pendlebury, "The roses are thawed--the icicles are dew-drops."

"I have never been on foot in Perford be-

fore," Kate observed, as they stepped from the door.

"Can that really be so?" exclaimed Aunt Barbara.

"Yes," Kate repeated. "When I was a child, the servants were expressly forbidden to bring me here; and so it acquired to me the sort of taboo which we accept without reasoning about it. I have often felt it would be a relief to do some forbidden thing; but it never occurred to me to commit this virtuous trespass on closed preserves."

"Then you know nothing about Perford!" cried Lois, enthusiastically, like one who has entire possession of a treasure which others refuse to value because they consider it was got cheaply. "Have you never been inside the church? Then we will go in now: for this is the night when it is dusted, and the charwomen know me."

Kate Pride never forgot Perford church as she first saw it, with a few candles dimly glimmering here and there in its dusky depth. She had seen vast and glorious continental churches, but none had ever taken possession of her with such a sense of space and mystery. For space and mystery are not measured by

yards or feet. A feeling of recognition stirred within her. "Could she have ever been brought there when she was a baby?" she asked herself.

"Is it very old?" she said in a whisper.

"It is older as a church than as a building," said Lois. "A chapel was founded here by a knight of Henry V.'s train, who accidentally slew his dearest friend in the chase. There is a bit of old stone wall in Church Street which they say belongs to the hermitage he built for himself. But this church itself was only built in the time of Queen Elizabeth. They say it was hindered for a while, because the timber that was prepared for it was made into a blazing beacon to give warning of the Spanish Armada; the great scaffold poles for the tower were planted upright, and lit at the top. And you must have heard our bells, Miss Pride, for they sound softly as far as Culstead. They will ring to-night while you are at our house, for they always ring on Thursdays. One Thursday night, in the reign of George I., a lady who lived at Perwood—that was where the railway station is now—welcomed home her only son, whom she had mourned as worse

than dead—for he had left home in anger, and had been cast away with his shipmates on a desert island. She sent down word for the ringers to ring, and she did the same the next week, and every week while she lived, and when she died, she left a bequest that it might go on for ever, as the will said, ‘even as she should go on praising God in the mansions of His eternal kingdom.’ But I was beginning to tell you about the bells, and that ought to have come first, for if there had been no bells she could not have bidden them ring. These bells were made in Queen Elizabeth’s time by a Perford bell-maker. If you will come here by day-time, I will get the key of the tower and show them to you. There is some curious rude engraving on one of them, separated into three stages. On the highest, there are flying figures with trumpets and harps; on the next, there are priests and children with singing books, and on the lowest there are five workmen with their tools, and underneath is graven—

‘Thomas Falcon and his men,  
William, Joseph, George, and Ben,  
Made us all with all their might.  
Ring us, if you please, aright.  
Glory to God in highest heaven,  
Sixteen hundred ninety-seven.’

They were his free gift. Though the bells do not say so, the church record does; and, oh, Miss Pride!" exclaimed Lois, with a start of delighted recollection, "there is something down this aisle which you ought to see!"

Kate followed her swift steps—swift with a joyful freedom, a thousand times more reverent than the slow cringe of a slave over-simulating what he does not feel. And Kate thought to herself that she had never before in her life had such a cicerone as this. It was not dry-as-dust antiquarian stories she had been hearing, but living lines from the poem of humanity—wine from the sweet vintages of the past, stored in a heart which gave it the rich flavour of age without its cobwebs.

Lois passed many a quaint memorial at which Kate would have liked to linger, and she paused before a tiny, plain slab of marble scarcely larger than a schoolboy's slate. But from it Kate read:—

TO THE MEMORY OF  
JAMES BURGESS,  
For fifty years the faithful servant and friend of  
HENRY PRIDE,  
Haberdasher, of Cooke's Alley, in this place, who,  
sorrowing, erects this tablet.

"I thought you would like to see that," said Lois.

"Thank you," answered Kate. "I ought to have seen it long ago." Was her father really so blind to the true dignity of man that he had hastened to forget the simple worth of that record because his grandfather had been the "haberdasher of Cooke's Alley?"

"It is the only tablet connected with your family," related Lois, "though their graves are all outside in the churchyard. But there is no other grave with the name of Burgess on it. Sometimes I think your great-grandfather put up that because James Burgess had been a stranger and a bachelor, and he did not like him to be quite forgotten in the place where he had lived and been so good."

Kate followed her out of the church without a word. At the door she turned, and looked again at the great dusky place. Was part of its mysterious charm due to the fact that here her homely, old-fashioned forefathers had worshipped, had borne their humble sorrows and joys, had been baptized, married, and buried? We scarcely know what threads are wrought into our being.

They had to go round the church to come

out into the High Street, and Lois still had her guileless honours to do. She pointed out a house "which artists came to see;" it was such a fine old timbered house; "but they would not like to go into it," she added sorrowfully; "it is so dirty. An old woman who lives there tells me she can remember when there were pictures in the panels; but they are all gone now; they've torn down a great deal of the panelling for firewood. Poor things! the rooms are very draughty in winter."

They came out in front of the quaint shop-window, with its small, heavily-framed panes. Behind the counter, in an oaken chair, sat Hannah Enticknapp, knitting a soft grey stocking. Within reach of her hand was her calf-bound ledger, a brown jar full of dahlias, and a Wedgwood inkstand fashioned like the base of a Doric column.

It was not Aunt Barbara's first visit to the fine old Quakeress, but it was her first lamp-lit visit, and when she saw that pretty picture, she remembered her return to Perford, and how the pleasant shop had seemed an oasis in its desert. With the memory of that first night, not lately thought of, came memory of the sweet wild face which had so touched Aunt Bar-

bara's heart. And now it was no more unknown. With her foot on Lois Enticknapp's threshold, Miss Pendlebury recalled where she had first seen Lydia Calderwood.

Hannah Enticknapp welcomed them cordially. "Thou art a fellow-towns-woman," she said, when Kate was introduced. "Thy people were here, old inhabitants, when Jacob and I were strangers. Follow me to the parlour," she said. "I will bid Paul Stach to look to the shop."

And so Kate found herself in a parlour behind a shop—a room of the class in which her father and her father's father had been bred. She wondered how he could be ashamed of it, if it had been at all like this. This was divided from the shop by a wall with windows with fantastically-shaped panes, the lower half of which was screened by blinds which gave those within the command of the shop, without forfeiting their privacy. It was further lit by a window at the other end, now covered by a full chintz curtain of a quaint pattern. The chairs had cushions of the same; there was a side-table laden with work-boxes and a big Bible. There were some curious wooden figures of rus-

German carving on the high, narrow mantel-board, with its deep frilling of green stuff, and another brown jar like that in the shop stood inside the grate, but with a growing myrtle instead of cut-flowers; for the baking oven warmed the house, so that fires were slow to come and swift to vanish from its sitting-rooms.

"You have kept faithfully to your old dwelling-place," said Kate Pride.

Hannah Enticknapp smiled and looked around with loving eyes. "When some of my former neighbours come to visit me," said she, "it seems dull to them, for, indeed, they say so, which I sometimes think is not quite kindly. It is not what it was when Jacob brought me here. They have shut in the churchyard, and built great flat factories in place of pleasant dwellings. Sometimes I think I should not know Perfoid, if I had not seen it from then till now. But I could never find that old Perfoid if I sought for it over all the world, neither anywhere else could I find the house where Jacob and I lived together, and whence he went to God."

"I cannot give up the old life, except for

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new life," she went on. "I do not look forward to dying in this house. That will be as God directs. But if Lois and I did as some advise us, we should find some little cottage with a rose-tree in the garden, and a poultry yard behind, and we should have to spend our whole lives in sparing and caring for ourselves, which would not be good for us, and we should have no relations with other people, which would be bad for us. I love roses, and Else never lets the house be without flowers, and Lois keeps some chickens in her little green garden. But roses and poultry will not satisfy a soul, nor fill hands which have thrown away work to grasp them."

And then Kate thought within herself, these must be people such as her father called "unsuccessful," because, while he had gilded a great prison to shut himself in, and had heaped up a great store to worry himself about, they had only made for themselves a home which was to them a resting-place, and to others a refuge.

And then they had a talk about things in general, and about poor old Dan Chambers in particular; for the struggle was growing altogether too hard for the old man. He no longer

needed only the piece of bread and the cup of tea, which had been so hard to get; he needed also care and guidance. He had got out-door relief allowed him, but for a month only; at the end of that time his case was to be reconsidered.

“But the guardians have really some mercy under what looks so cruel,” said Hannah Enticknapp. “The relieving officer comes to our shop, and I mentioned the matter to him, and he explained it to me. He said, ‘What is half-a-crown a week, and what will it do? For a poor widow, working hard, and with two or three children, growing better able to help themselves every day, it will perhaps pay the rent till the day of trouble is over. But half-a-crown a week and two or three loaves will not keep old Chambers, and where is the rest to come from? If some day the poor man is found dead from starvation, then the guardians will be blamed for having connived at his obstinacy by giving him a little help, instead of compelling him to come into the house, by withholding all.’ John Peters is not a bad man,” said Hannah Enticknapp with a humorous smile, “though his speech sounds hard. He cannot understand how old Dan can choose

his empty, dirty room, instead of the big, clean workhouse. He says 'there ain't a poor man in Perford as well lodged as the paupers.'"

"Yes," said Lois, "he said to me the other day, 'Now, miss, you can't say you would make such an awful fuss at having to live like they do in the house. You've been inside, and you knows the food is fit to eat, and the beds is decent. I know the company ain't select, but they're mostly much of a muchness, and needn't grumble at that. Would lords and ladies kick up a row if they were purwided with better than they'd ever had before, and no more trouble thinking about it? It's on reasonable, Miss Lois.'"

"And what did you say, Lois?" asked Miss Pendlebury.

"I said," answered Lois, "'Mr. Peters, the workhouse has not been the terror of my life, against which I have been fighting all my days. To avoid it has not been my sole ambition. If I ever find myself there, it will be, most likely, because I have voluntarily chosen it in preference to something else. The cases are quite different.'"

"And I said," added her mother, "'Friend Peters, man doth not live by bread alone.'

**And it is well that man knows that in his heart, else we might be all in the workhouse together, the guardians and thee, and everybody."**

"I have been asking about Stott's alms-houses," remarked Miss Pendlebury. "I had noticed they were vanished from Stott's Row, and Lois tells me they have been rebuilt at New Culstead."

"Yes, that is so," said Hannah Enticknapp. "The land in Stott's Row grew very valuable, and then, thou seest, just at that time they discovered that it could not be healthy for the old folks to live where they had grown old, and were in sight of their children and grand-children. I say nothing on the question whether charity houses should stand where factories may be built; but if that is wrong, then they need not have brought in the plea of unhealthiness, for if the place was unhealthy, it was fit for nothing. They used to keep twelve old people on the original foundation. By reducing the number to eight, and adding on the ground-rent of the old premises, they have managed to found Stott's school, up in New Culstead, where the little ones learn the number of square miles in a county before they can tell you what a square is."

"And the eight alms-people are old domestic servants and retainers of our Culstea-gentry," said Kate Pride, with a sneer in her voice.

"Well, never mind," answered the good Quakeress, with her sweet calmness. "Our poor people will learn presently that they must work for no wage that will not provide for their own old age, and will learn what work will do so, and will go where it can be found. We never do well when we think that the former days are better than these. It seems so, sometimes, because only the good has survived, and the foolish and bad have perished. We know of more evil and misery now, because we have better means of knowing everything. All England rings with a story of starvation, while a hundred such stories would never have been heard about before the days of newspapers. Dost thou understand? God has predestined all men and all things to grow better and to go forward. But the pace is our own; else we should be but slaves tied and dragged with chains, dost thou not see? instead of children free to do a little mischief and to turn our toys upside down, yet never able

to escape from the security of our Father's house. It does not help the world to say it is going back, for we can strive to climb the steepest hill; but who would strain himself on a path that was slipping down beneath his feet?"

And then, by way of discussing how merely high wages do not always mean prosperity, conversation slipped to the thrifty workmen of the Black Forest and the wooden carvings on the mantel-shelf. And then Aunt Barbara asked if they would show Kate the strange, suggestive household gods which they had already shown her. And taking a bright brass candlestick of a heavy old make, Lois led the way up the bare wooden stairs to the wide, low room over the shop. The candle shed but a subdued light, yet sufficed to show Kate the plain panelling, the stained floor with its strips of blue carpet, strong and rough in texture and without pattern, and the stiff, stout oak furniture, a little older than that in the parlour, and therefore, like venerable people, placed in the room of honour.

But Lois had her treasures to show. There was the stiff drawing of Herrnhut, with its straight streets and rows of trees. "My father

visited Herrnhut nearly forty years ago," she said; "that was when he first met our foreman, Paul Stach. Paul's great grand-uncle was one of the first people who settled in Herrnhut, and he was the very first to dig in the pretty green graveyard you see in the picture. Afterwards he went to the Greenland mission. And this is the model of a canoe made by one of the first Greenland converts. Matthew Stach sent it home to Herrnhut. It belongs to Paul; but he likes us to hang it here, because then it is quite safe. That is a portrait of Count Zinzendorf. It is very old; it comes from my grandfather's house in Copenhagen. So does that pot, Miss Pride. Do you know what it is? It is just my grandmother's old coffee-pot. Do not you think the bright brass looks pretty in this shady room? and it is what my father had his breakfast from every morning when he was a boy. Do you notice the big plate standing on the little shelf? If you look at it closely you will see that part of what appears like a pattern is really German character. It is very quaint; I do not think I could make it out if my father had not told me what it is. It means 'the paths to a true friend lie straight, though

he be far away.' Do you see the picture of the two men supping together? One is evidently a citizen of Christiana, and the other is in the dress of a Lapp. And here in this corner is an outline of fells and fiords, with a line crossing them all, to show the way the Lapp reached his friend. That plate belonged to my grandmother's people; I mean my father's mother. She was a Norwegian by descent, and she was not a Moravian"—and Lois playfully lowered her voice, as if some sedate ghosts might be in the room, and she did not wish to hurt their feelings. "It was she who taught my father the songs and stories he told me. One of my grandmother's great-uncles had been a bishop of Bergen, and father used to think that plate had been made for him, because, on the leaf of the open Bible which is carved on his tomb, there is the text about 'entertaining strangers.' It was through grandmother's people that father came to England and married mother. Grandmother's brother was one of the Norwegian prisoners taken in Napoleon's wars, to whom the English Quakers were so kind. His stories made father wish to come to England, and from him he got many introductions among the Friends.

And it was grandmother who sent us Else Beck, and our cat's great-grandmother," finished Lois with a gay laugh, as Else appeared, bearing a tray and followed by the familiar yellow Floss. "Yes," said Lois, "we owe a great deal to Grandmother Ingebjora. Sometimes I wish father had named me after her."

"Ah, that was my fault!" explained her mother. "I was not over-wise in those days; and I thought it had a wild, pagan sound."

And while Hannah Enticknapp surrounded Kate Pride with her gentle, old-fashioned hospitalities, her honey, her lemonade, and her crisp biscuits, Aunt Barbara drew her hand through the daughter's arm and said—

"Lois, did not you meet Lydia Calderwood for the first time last March?"

A paleness swept over Lois's face, but her eyes flashed with swift Norse fire. She would have trusted her own life to Miss Pendlebury's kindness; but in her passionate desire to save Lydia, she felt ready to resent any word that might startle the peace she was guarding, and recall the fever of despair which had scarcely departed.

“ Yes,” she answered, “ I did.”

“ I think I saw her first,” said Miss Pendlebury, “ for she travelled with me from the sea-side; I recalled that to-night. Don’t be fierce, Lois. You have taken all responsibility about her upon yourself. I ask only that I may share it, if any need arises.”

“ I beg your pardon,” Lois answered, very humbly; “ I did not mean to be fierce. But I was frightened. I know how people feel about—other people. She is good now, Miss Pendlebury. And oh, she is punished enough! let us do what we may.”

Aunt Barbara and Kate made a longer visit than they had intended, and Kate enjoyed a sense of adventure in returning through the dark Perford streets to the House by the Works.

“ How I liked the dear old mother owning that she had been a little narrow in her Quaker youth,” she said. “ The daughter is like an ancient goddess in her strength and simplicity. As long as any good work of hand or head is wanted in the world, she will find something to do! I wonder if it is not better to be provided for so, than to have a fortune? That shop would make a picture! And I’m sure our

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drawing-rooms would not, except it might be for an upholsterer's catalogue."

When the two ladies went in-doors to wait while the carriage was prepared to take Kate to Culstead, they found a note on the hall-table. It was marked "immediate," and the parlour-maid said it had been brought by the stable-boy from Wood Lodge, and that he had inquired if Miss Pendlebury was within, as, if so, he was bidden to await an answer. Yet it did not seem to require one, for it was in Mrs. Pendlebury's back-twisted, fretful handwriting, hysterically under-scored, and it only said this :—

" DEAREST BARBARA,—Let me implore you to discharge your sewing girl *instantly*. I have been, most *providentially*, informed, on the very best authority, that she is *a thoroughly bad character!* If you boldly tax her with this, she will not *dare* to deny it! Darling Barbara, you have such an unsuspecting heart, it is well you have some warier heads to protect you from *imposture!* I shall anxiously await news of your riddance of *this dangerous creature!*

" Yours devotedly,

" LAVINIA PENDLEBURY."

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Without a word, Aunt Barbara handed the **note** to her companion.

“ Confound !—” cried Kate. “ No, it’s not swearing ; it’s a quotation from the National **Anthem**—

‘ Confound their knavish tricks.’ ”





## CHAPTER XIII.

### ON CULSTEAD COMMON.

**L**YDIA CALDERWOOD did not  
up her work until she heard the  
close behind Lois and the la  
Then she flung on her bonnet and mantle  
hasty recklessness, and went out into the st  
She turned in the opposite direction from l  
Moffat's house. She was not going ho  
though Mrs. Moffat might wonder what  
become of her.

“ Let her wonder ! ” said Lydia to hers  
“ it does not matter to her ; I am only  
lodger ! ”

She did not care what she did or where  
went, only she felt she could not sit still i  
little room. The whole world did not s  
large enough for her. The cold autumn v  
seemed to smother her. On she went thro

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the Perford streets, at a pace which would have attracted attention anywhere else, but which nobody noticed here. Even the steepness of the Culstead road did not check her speed, though it made her heart thump heavily and sent the burning blood to her wan cheeks.

“ And this is how I am to go on for years and years ! ” she said aloud, for now there was nothing to hear her but the half-leafless trees and the scanty hedgerow, though every now and then her swift feet sent the dead leaves whirring behind her, and startled her with the fancy that somebody was stealthily following.

“ Years and years, and I suppose, as nobody wants me, I shall live till I am ninety. Nobody does want me—nobody can want me. Of course I know Lois Enticknapp has been good to me—I don’t deny that, and I know I’ve often made her miserable enough—I don’t deny that either. Sometimes I doubt if she will be as ready to begin doing good again ; and if she isn’t, I suppose I shall be answerable for that. I suppose I shall be always in the wrong about everything. I know Lois has been kind,” she reiterated, as if something accused her of forgetting it; “ kind, like we are to a starved kitten which we go on petting till we are quite

sure it is able to live, and then put down to take its own chance again. She does not count me as a friend. When she has to choose between me and other people, I am the one to be left. Of course it's quite right; it's only what I should expect; it would not be so unbearable if it was not for that. She has her mother and all her household to worship her, and Miss Pendlebury to praise her, and that man in Germany to love her. She has never spoken to me about him. Oh, no! it would pollute his name to mention it to me. I have only heard of him by chance. And I am to sit under the banquet of life and pick up the crumbs! I should like to see how her angelhood would gather itself together if it had once got down where I have— Lydia Calderwood, you are a demon!"

The passion was past. The frenzy of despair which might rend her best friend only because it must rend something, dropped down in her heart, and was drowned in a burst of tears. There was no longer a frantic woman rushing along the road—only a poor lost child standing in the dark, crying for home. She was nearly in Culstead by this time. Lamps burning softly in pleasant

chambers, glared out upon her, looking fixed and lurid, through the heavy October mist. And there was no place for her, and she was scarcely twenty years old, and it might go on for such a long time! She felt as if she was outside herself—was some strange, pitiful being weeping over the poor little tired creature whose story she knew too well. She stretched her cold hand out into the darkness, as if she thought somebody might clasp it. “O God!” she cried, “Lois’s God! I don’t believe you are far off, if I could only find you.”

At that moment, a heavy footstep on the gravel roused her, and she started aside from the roadway and struck across the common, slipping and stumbling in the darkness and damp. Walking there was nearly as hard as on a shingly shore; and she remembered when she had so walked, and how that same night the streets of Perford had sent terror and dismay into her heart—those familiar homely streets, which now she had almost learned to love! Do many terrors vanish so? Would the years, whose long lonesome vista so chilled her now, reveal resting-corners and fresh fountains if she walked bravely down them?

"But while you are yourself, Lydia Caldw<sup>l</sup> wood, you will be always miserable," whis<sup>l</sup>pered that voice which scarcely seemed he<sup>l</sup> own, and yet seemed to rise from the deepest depth of her being. "You have got all yo<sup>u</sup> prayed for when you came to Perford—secure dwelling, work, and kind friends—yo<sup>u</sup> you are almost as ready to curse God an<sup>l</sup> die, as you were on that morning when yo<sup>u</sup> stood by the sea."

Lydia's tears came slower and more softl<sup>l</sup>. "I don't think I should dream of killin<sup>l</sup> myself now," she reflected. "I wonder that shows that I've grown a little bette<sup>l</sup>. That is what frightens me. I believe I am exactly the same as ever, only that I am out of the way of temptation; and if that's the case, my repentance is not worth anything and I might as well leave off trying to be good and try to enjoy myself. No; I don't mean that. If the only way I could keep from evil was to shut myself up in a prison I hope I'd do it, and lock the door inside and slip the key under the door to prevent me from being able to change my mind. But oh! the dreariness!"

And just as her tears burst forth again

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she heard a groan which even to her unstrung nerves was certainly neither her own nor the creation of her fancy ; yet the place seemed utterly lonely. She was far enough from the high road for its lamps to be quiet invisible in the thickening fog. Straight before her were some low scraggy trees which she knew overhung a little hollow, seldom quite dry, and which, after such rain as had fallen lately, probably contained a pool. If that bitter groan came from living creature, it must be crouching upon the sand under the heathery lip of the chasm. With the tears left on her cheek for the wind to dry, Lydia Calderwood stole forward.

Was it a gorse-bush she could discern, or was it a woman ? She must creep down to it, if she would make sure. It lay quite still. One moment she fancied she could see a bough, and that it was only a bush ; the next moment the bough assumed the semblance of an arm flung upon the ground, with fingers clutching the dust.

Lydia stepped carefully over the edge, which crumbled and slipped beneath her cautious steps. Still she could not be quite sure ; she reached forth her hand and she

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touched a gown—a satin gown, though that she did not notice at that moment.

The heap stirred a little, and a voice came from it. “Let me alone,” it moaned. “If I ain’t a credit to you, you would not have got anybody better to do what I did!”

“You must not lie here,” said Lydia. “You will catch your death of cold and wet. You will slip into the water.”

“I mean to lie down in it. A very little water’s enough. I’ve heard of a woman that was found drowned in a tub. Her husband had been knocking her about and drove her to it. Ah! there’s a many sorts of blows. I wonder if he was really her husband?”

The forlorn creature had turned a little and raised her face as she spoke; and there came such an odour of spirituous drink that Lydia, faint and excited, nearly sickened. She turned away in disgust; then she stopped.

“Is this the way I feel towards any sin but my own?” she said to herself. “And down by the sea I was beginning to long always for my wine, and to take a little between meals. God help us all!” And she went back to the woman. “Why have you

come here?" she said. "This is not a fit place for you, whoever you are."

"I've come to be out of the way," the woman answered. "I do nothing to please. If you knew what it was to be afraid to eat your food or to walk across a room, you'd know your life was a misery to you. I'd never have had aught to do with a fine gentleman," she added, raising her voice to a husky shriek. "I'd have known he was tempting me to hell. But mine was one not so much above my own sort, and had got taken in first himself; and he ain't any genteeler than I am, if he could only see himself," she went on, with a coarse maudlin laugh; "I know my girl knows he ain't, though she's a good girl and holds her tongue. But she's fond of me. She'd leave any of her fine lady governesses to come to her own mother—that she would, any day of the year. And she might have married a lord, and why not? The lord's father's wife had been an opera-dancer, and had a daughter who was an impudent hussy that took after her, and insulted me once, though she made out afterwards it was all a mistake. And I only say 'Yes' and 'No'

when I want to be genteel. And I ain't ba  
looking when my clothes suit me, and th  
are always of the best."

It was horrible to hear the vulgar commo  
place talk, mocking the tragedy of the situ  
tion and the hour.

"Where is your daughter?" Lydia ask  
anxious to keep the unhappy woman's t  
muddled thought upon some softening topic

"She's gone out, and word has come th  
she won't be home till late this evening,  
suppose it is late now?" she added inter  
rogatively, and then went on. "It was  
right when she went out this afternoon, or s  
wouldn't have gone—she wouldn't. Oft  
has she stayed at home, quite suddenly, ev  
after she'd put on her beautiful dresses,  
she's fancied things were going wrong."

"What will she do when she returns hor  
to-night and finds you not there?" plead  
Lydia.

"Ah! it'll come hard at first," answer  
the other, beginning to shed maudlin tea  
"But it will be over for good and all, a  
then it will come easier. It will be cover  
up as respectably as can be, you may  
sure; he will see to that. They'll call

nervousness and temporary insanity. They always do, when it is a person who is well off."

"But you are going home," persisted Lydia. "I will take you home; and I want you to make haste, for I am growing very cold." She felt that all appeal to higher impulses would be lost just now, and that her surest ally would be the stirring of some of the physical instincts.

"It *is* cold," said the other in a confidential tone, "and, poor thing! you have not much of a jacket. I don't notice the cold so much. Feel this shawl; isn't it a soft, warm beauty?" Lydia mechanically obeyed. She would do any little thing which might increase her influence over the degraded waif, and it was thus that she noticed the shawl was a Chuddah, the dress of satin, and that the pushed-about, bent bonnet was adorned with a long purple plume. This woman had the home, the ties, the pleasant luxuries which Lydia had longed for, and yet here she was, with her life and her reputation at Lydia's mercy. And Lydia thought, with a womanly yearning, what must it be to be this woman's children—her grown children ap-

parently—who must realise all the horror of it, and who yet might love her, even as she loved the stained memory of her own poor father!

“But you will let me take you home now I am so chilly,” Lydia persisted, as if she felt there was something kindly about the miserable woman, which might vaguely yield to the voice of appeal on another’s behalf.  
“Which way shall we go?”

She supported her as she staggered to her feet. She would have been a tall, comely matron could she have stood firmly upright.  
“Ah! I knew I’d be hindered somehow,” she muttered. “I might have saved myself all this trouble. I never can put things through. You are a stranger here, surely,” she added, with a tremulous scoff in her voice, “or you’d know the big house with the shining red pillars and the gilt points to the palings.”

“Oh, I know the way to that,” said Lydia. She had noticed the gilded palings, dull and coppery in the fog, only that very evening, having come down a side of the common where Lois had never brought her. “I won’t take us many minutes to reach that,”

But the journey was not so speedy as it might have been under other circumstances. The woman stumbled and slipped over the uneven ground, and it took all Lydia's small strength to stay her uncertain footsteps. Her scraps of talk grew wilder and more incoherent. Now that her fit of despairing fury was over, her whole nature rapidly succumbed to the degrading potions she had taken. By the time they reached the road, she was little more than a dumb dead weight on the girl's arm.

But when Lydia saw the great house within its carriage drive, her heart sank within her with a new dismay. Could this be its mistress, or was she only one of the upper servants—a class of whose luxury and extravagance she knew a little? Her dress proclaimed her the former, her speech was of the latter. How was Lydia to take her up the grand flight of steps and through the great glass doors of the hall, where probably a footman would meet them? Lydia's first impulse was to lead her there, put her inside, and wait without, unseen, till she could be sure that she was succoured and guarded from another wild dash into the darkness;

though, indeed, she now seemed too sluggish and besotted for any such attempt. Lydia left her leaning against the portico, and darted up the steps alone; but she found the doors fast, as she might have expected in the near neighbourhood of a place like Perford, where the poor can hope so little from the rich, that the rich have good cause to fear the poor! And the splendour of the place! The rich carpet spread over the dainty tiles, the tall mirrors, the gorgeous exotics standing on marble tables, to say nothing of the great Russian leather screened chair, where a pair of legs gave notice of the presence of a dozing livery servant,—all withheld Lydia's hand from touching the bell ~~she~~ saw in the door post. Lydia stole down the steps again, and thought her footfall had never been so loud.

Be this mistress or maid, she must creep through the low back door which Lydia presently found in the ivy-covered side wall. That only admitted them to a little paved court beside the house. There was another door in the wall of the building, and Lydia cautiously ascertained that it was also fastened. Here she must ring the bell, and when

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heard responsive footsteps she could hurry away and watch in the carriage ring to make sure there was no mistake.

But the door flew open almost before the bell had sounded, and a woman, a smart servant, with an untied bonnet perched on her head, came out with a rush and jostled against them.

“Lawk-a-mercy!” she cried, “it’s well you’re back within five minutes of your being missed, ma’am! Such a turn as you’ve given us all! And, ugh! what a state you are in!” she added, seizing the reeling woman in a strong, rough grasp, and looking down at her muddy dress and rumpled shawl. “You’ll find yourself in the lock-up one of these days, with your beastly habits and your mad goings-on; and what will the master do then, I wonder, **Mrs. Pride?**”

A piercing shriek rang through the house—a shriek high, clear, and terrible. It rang within, without, through the spacious corridors, and among the shivering autumn trees. The hurrying servants paused, in sheer horror, while Kate Pride, at that moment stepping from Miss Pendlebury’s carriage,

turned from the great flight of steps and flew to the side door—the terror always sleeping in her heart starting up within her, though she knew this was not her mother's voice.

There, on the damp ground, with her hands on the kitchen threshold and her white face half upturned, lay Lydia Calderwood.

"She brought home the mistress," whispered the housemaid to her young lady, "and it must have been too much for her, for she dropped down like a stone."

"Where is my mother?" gasped Kate, looking round; but the sight of a tall figure uncertainly retreating down the kitchen passage, in the guidance of an elderly maid-servant, was all the answer Kate got or required just then. They were carrying Lydia in, and as the lamplight fell full on her face Miss Pride started eagerly forward.

"It is the young woman that works at Miss Pendlebury's," volunteered the page, when they had placed her on the low kitchen settle.

Her face was scarcely whiter than Kate's own, and in its pitiful unconsciousness it was not half so wildly sad.

“Take her to my room,” said Kate; “it might frighten her to see so many people when she recovers.” And as she followed the group of bearers she hated herself for the words. They would have been natural and true under any other circumstances, but now the utter truth would have been, “Take her to my room, for I choose that nobody but myself shall hear what she may say when she recovers.”

And when they were all dismissed but Kate’s own maid, Parkes, and while Parkes herself was busy with aromatic vinegar and mint feathers, Kate turned to her little coquettish retaire and touched the spring of a secret case. A lid flew up, and from a little heap of letters and manuscripts Kate’s trembling fingers selected one. It was only a memorandum of expenses—a young man’s careless writings—where every second item was called “sundries,” but on its back was a sketch of a young girl with dark waving hair and passionate eyes. About the soft round coat closed the daintily ruffled dress. This girl, mute on the sofa, was white and worn, the mendings in her coarse alpaca skirt and sheep thread gloves on her hands; but that

girl and this girl were the same, and Kate Pride was sure of it now, though perhaps the resemblance would never have struck her had she met this girl anywhere else, or under any other circumstances.

"I think she's coming to, miss," said Parkes, and Kate shut the spring with a snap.

"Then leave her to me, Parkes," she said huskily. "You can wait within call in case you are wanted."

"She's all right now; you needn't be frightened, miss," said Parkes; "look at the colour coming to her cheeks!" Parkes was not offended at her dismissal, because she wanted to gossip over everything with her fellow-servants. "Hadn't I better go and get some cordials ready, miss?" she asked; "she's sure to feel faintish."

"Yes, yes—anything—only go," said Kate impatiently.

Half an hour later, one of the Pride's footmen carried a note to Mrs. Moffat's, to apprise her that her lodger was quite safe, but would not return home till morning.

Kate's night was spent between the two chambers—her own and her mother's. Ther

was little to be done in the latter, for Mrs. Pride had soon fallen into a heavy sleep. There was not much to be done in the former—only a little whispering, only a few tears, and then the silence of exhaustion, and the wax candles died out, and the darkness seemed so merciful that Kate did not light others.

In the dim dawn, Kate stole downstairs to the greenhouse to gather a few flowers to greet her mother's waking—that terrible waking of remorse and shame, whose utter abandonment of self-blame and detestation had always saved Kate's love, albeit that love lay in her heart as unlike what it should have been, as a jewel stained with blood and wrenched from worthy setting, is unlike the diamond reflecting the sunshine and lending light to the brow of loveliness.

She paused at the drawing-room window and drew aside the curtain. The mists of the night before were rolling away, and in the valley below she could see the tall chimneys of Perford. It was dawn there too—dawn even in the worst room of those filthy slums, which in some public meeting she had once heard her father characterise as “dens

of iniquity" and "sinks of abomination;" and she thought to herself that the most squalid roof there could scarcely cover sadder skeletons than were crouching among the downy pillows of the two bedchambers she had left. Those might stalk abroad in loud street fights and coarse police-court revenge, while these might be but barely exposed by the half-credited gossip of dismissed servants; but Kate Pride's eyes were not of the short-sighted kind which see no farther than the surface of things, and she felt that a curse does indeed spread on all sides when the humanity that God has joined in one brotherhood is put asunder by gold and vanity.

The morning was still fresh, and the earliest of the factory people were only starting to their day's labour, when Kate Pride walked into Perford with Lydia Calderwood, and parted from her only at Mrs. Moffat's threshold.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### TWO LOVE LETTERS.

**O**NLY two or three weeks later, there came this letter to Lois Enticknapp.

“MY OWN Lois,—I am Herr Professor now. I would not tell you that the chance was open till I knew it was decided in my favour. And when are we to be married? We have never let ourselves think of that happy event as nearer than one year from this date. But why? I shall not be able to afford to furnish a dainty house for you at once—but do not the birds build together? I should like to ask you to a palace, Lois; still I think you would like also to give me a palace, and that you can do, transforming this place into one, by the magic of sitting down on the red cushion of the wooden chair that stands empty opposite me! You shall choose

your own china, my Lois, and we will ~~go~~ together to buy it; but meanwhile, there are more than a pair of everything even in ~~my~~ bachelor cupboard, so we need not be in a hurry. This house may be small for a bride, my Lois, but it is large and lonesome for a solitary lover.

“I am a German, Lois, and I want to ~~be~~ known as a betrothed man before I appear as a husband—and I want to be known as ~~a~~ a betrothed man now—while it is your good pleasure, after your shy English fashion, that our betrothal shall not be made public till within a very few months of our marriage. Lois, let me have my own way, and I will let you have yours.

“Do not sorrow about parting from your mother. Will she not come here with us? Why should not Paul Stach carry on the business for her, and Else Beck take care of the house, that all be ready for her return? so that she may threaten she will go away and leave us the moment she is not happy! Read her this, Lois, and I know she will say, ‘Hans enters into my feelings, and what thou dost provide against, thou dost often prevent.’

“ And now for a little gossip ; and I am so afraid lest any word of what I have to tell should hurt you, that I cannot bear to think there are hundreds of miles between us.

“ I have met a young Englishman lately, named Pendlebury. He is among a party of English youths, one or two of whom are my pupils, and from their talk with one another I found he came from Culstead. He learned that I had been in that part of England, and he answered me many questions about sundry places and people, and this made his conversation interesting to me. And now forgive me, Lois, for I know I did what I ought not. While you have sealed my lips as to our relationship one to the other, I should not have named you to a stranger. But I have not seen you for twelve months, Lois, and I had no reason then to think ill of this stranger, and I thought a good heart would show me a fresh reflection of you to cheer my hungry vision.

“ ‘ Do you know a family named Enticknapp—a widow and daughter—living at Persford ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Ah, a pretty girl,’ he said, and my heart bounded—for one does not much heed tones in a foreign tongue—one’s charity sets down aught

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unpleasant as due to some cause one does not understand. ‘A pretty girl,’ he repeated, ‘and a knowing one, looks like a saint, and manages to get thought such, but is dearest friend with a girl who also looks like a saint now, and is taking in a dear good soul of an aunt of mine, but whom I happen to know to be thoroughly bad. If she ever saw me, she would get a fright. I don’t think she ever heard my name. I expect those crafty Quakers are backing her up in some conspiracy, for the home of the gentleman, whose ‘wife’ she was called when I first saw her, is in Culstead, and she must have come into the neighbourhood immediately after he broke off his connection with her.’

“Lois, I was stunned, because I did not know whether I ought to break the silence I had promised you, and how otherwise could I have right to check the man’s malign recklessness? But I felt my promise to you was given, and must not be broken without your consent. And the poor youth will get part of his punishment when our betrothal is announced. Yet it would be wrong to let him go on thus lightly lying away the reputation of any woman; and so, though I was not

vain enough to suppose a word of mine would teach him, what none of God's words had taught him yet, still there must always be a beginning, and I made my little protest thus—

“Herr Pendlebury, I do not like to hear a man speak ill of women, because a good man knows how hard the world is to women who are not good, and an evil man is apt to speak ill of good women because he interprets them by his own bad experience.”

“And I never spoke one more word to him, not even a greeting the next time we met.

“Only two or three days after, as I was returning home late from the Public Library, I saw a crowd at the bottom of one of the streets. There were two or three policemen in the middle of it, and I went to inquire what the trouble was about. The hangers-on told me ‘a young Englishman was accused of theft.’ Then, thinking of my pupils, I pushed into the heart of the throng. Two evil-looking men and a smart Frenchwoman had accused Gilbert Pendlebury of taking a diamond ring from their rooms at the Grand Hotel, where he also resided. He had not

returned to his apartments afterwards, and so was arrested in the street. Without saying a word to him, I followed to the police house; there I stated what I knew of him, that he was the son of a wealthy and respectable English merchant, and I also stated what was more to the point, that when I was travelling with Count Salzburg's son, I had seen his accusers at the gaming tables in Monaco, where they had been pointed out to me as adventurers and swindlers of the very worst type. The consequence was that next day no accusers appeared, and Mr. Pendlebury was set at liberty. He was ready to overwhelm me with gratitude. Of course he had had little to fear from the mere charge from the first. 'I knew they only wanted to extort money,' he said; 'but they tried it at the wrong time, for I am short of cash, or I would have given anything to prevent the scandal I feared, and to keep my father from knowing I had been in such people's company.'

"'If I ever see the Herr father I shall tell him,' I said gravely, 'therefore I would advise you to tell him yourself. It is not well to keep secrets whose opening would not be to one's credit. And perhaps you will explain to every-

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body what a mere chance made me your helper and adviser, for you know how hardly you yourself might judge of me, as the presumed friend of a young man who keeps such bad company that he falls into the policeman's hands. Good morning, Herr Pendlebury!' I said, and he looked at me hard, and he went away. It is very painful to strike blows, Lois. They hurt the hands which must give them almost as much as the backs which must bear them!

"But now, Lois, you have a story to tell me. What good deed have you been doing in secret? I am not going to blame you for delaying your confidence. Perhaps one can plant seeds better than two. But when the harvest is ripe, we may call others to rejoice with us over it. If the harvest is not yet ripe, Lois, say so, and I will ask no more. Keep your secrets while you feel you should keep them, and I shall but love you better for your silence. Our mutual love shall but further our wills, and give us more to God and to our fellow-creatures.

"Yes, Lois, come to be with me altogether as soon as ever you can. I feel as if I was insulting you, when I urge you not to wait till I can exchange this ingrain drugget for a Turkey carpet, and yonder willow pattern plate for a

Dresden one. What have you and I to do with such things, Lois? We are both of the people, which means simply that those from whom we are proud to be descended, found the best of life among bare boards and pewter platters. I shame you to name such things. You, in your grand simplicity, are doubtless unaware that there is a section of society where meat is more than life, and raiment more than the body! But even that section will not wonder at us, Lois, for they will say, 'After all, the Herr professor is the son of a country innkeeper, and therefore this is natural in him.' And why should I resent even that sort of approval, while I thank God that it is true?

"Give my love to your mother, my Lois, and also my salutations to Paul and to Else, and to anybody else who kindly remembers me. And please to write to me at once, and tell me how soon I am to change my style of

"Your devoted Lover,

"HANS ENDBERG."

In less than two days afterwards this answer passed through the foreign branch of the Per-ford post-office :—

“MY OWN DEAR HANS,—Your letter gave me only one pang, and that was to think that anybody can be so cruel and unreasonable as young Mr. Pendlebury. But then how dreadful it is to be so! And how terribly ashamed one must be when one finds one’s self out at last! Yet, then, truly, the worst is over, and poor Mr. Pendlebury will not need so much pity then as he does now.

“I have kept no secret, I think. Only I got to know Lydia Calderwood when she was very sad and very lonely. And I grew to love her. And because I loved her, I did not want to speak about her, even to you, till I could assuredly say of her, ‘This is my friend.’ For Lydia did not like me at once, as I liked her. She could not be quite sure whether she would really like me.

“We are friends now, we two girls. I knew from the first whose wickedness had cursed her life, but she did not know that she had come to live near his family, and I never told her. I did not feel sure what I should do, and I thought if she ought to know she would know in time.

“She knows now. One night, when she was taking a solitary walk, and was feeling vexed and angry because I had not accom-

panied her (and she made a wrong guess why I had not done so), she met his mother. O Hans! I don't like to write about these things, they are so terrible that it seems heartless to write about them coolly, and to hurry over their story, that we may commune about our own happy love. You must burn this letter directly you read it. And lest you should not like to burn all that has just come from me—as I never can burn even your envelopes—I have written this on a sheet apart from our own affairs.

“Do you remember hearing the name of Pride when you were in Perford? The great house on Culstead Common belongs to the Prides, and we used to meet the son and daughter on horseback. Do you remember the son? That is he of whom young Mr. Pendlebury speaks.

“The Prides are very, very rich. But they come from poor people like ourselves, and the vast fortune is all of the senior Mr. Pride's making. And they have not been fortunate in any other way. The poor mother cannot keep from drinking, and is very miserable and often tries to kill herself. And that was how Lydia met her on the common that night. And when

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she took her home, she heard her name. Lydia fainted, and Miss Pride found her so, and the whole story came out. After Miss Pride brought Lydia back to her lodgings and left her there, she came on to our shop and left a message with Paul Stach, asking me to go to Lydia at once. And when I heard the message and who had left it, I guessed what had happened, and I was terribly frightened.

“I needed not to be frightened. I found Lydia quite calm, and very pleased to see me. She showed more pleasure in seeing me than she had ever shown before. Lydia and I are sure friends now.

“She is no longer bitter. I knew she had a longing for beautiful clothes and grand rooms, and I feared lest the sight of those to which he stands so terribly near, would hurt her. But then she saw the skeleton lurking amid the grandeur. And I think she feels that John pride, with his home and his up-bringing, was pitifully unprepared for life and its trials, in a way, as was she herself in hers, and that and she are rather partners in fall and loss, in victimiser and victim.

“She never speaks to me directly of the des, except in the most ordinary way, but

I gather these thoughts of hers from what she says of other things.

“ Miss Pride comes to see Lydia very often. Lydia has never been at the Pride’s house again. I suppose some people would think Miss Pride ought to show her love for her brother by ignoring Lydia’s existence and his sin. But I think her way is right. She said to me one day, ‘ I shall never give up my brother, and therefore I owe a duty to all whom he wrongs. Mercy to him must be founded on justice to them.’

“ And now, dear Hans, let me speak about ourselves. I am ready for you when you want me. I shall be very glad to come to you. Why should I not say so? Ought I not to feel so? The chestful of linen is not quite finished yet—well, its finishing will give me employment when you have to leave me alone in your strange city. I think it is a cruel and foolish custom which leaves a bride nothing to do after she is married.

“ My mother says she will not return with us to your home, but will follow us very soon,—in a few weeks, just long enough for me to learn to walk alone in my new place, and to feel myself the mistress and hostess. I could

not help crying a little when I reflected how the days of our old home life were numbered, but she only said, 'Lois, dost thou grudge that thou hast given a son to thy widowed mother?'

"So, Hans, you may at once announce our betrothal.

"How pleasant it is that Paul and Else need not be unsettled in their old age. I cannot bear the saying that 'service is no inheritance.' It ought to be such. And what can I do about Lydia? It will be hard to leave her—and need I do so, unless it is for the best for her? Lydia does not mind what work she does now. She and I could keep your house without any more help. Can that be wrong? If not, I know my brave Hans will never say, 'It is not proper.'

"And now, with my mother's blessing, I am, in life and death,

"Your own

"Lois."

"P.S.—A man has just come into the shop, saying that 'old Mr. Pride has fallen down the flight of stone steps at the railway station, and has been picked up for dead.' I cannot write one word more, and I must post this before I can ascertain the truth, or I shall miss to-night's mail."



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE POOR RICH MAN.

**H**E rumour which Lois had heard was only too true. To his great house on Culstead Common poor "Plebeian Pride" was carried by six men, a mere senseless mass.

There was only one strong heart, only one pair of steady hands, to receive him. His numerous hireling household ran hither and thither, panic-stricken, and occupied themselves in admiring and recounting their own dismay. The unhappy Mrs. Pride fell into strong convulsions, and absorbed the attention of the only faithful and disinterested servant in the mansion—her own personal attendant. There was nobody but Kate to receive the terrible cortége—to second the wishes of the medical men by peremptory

domestic commands, and even, in many cases, to execute these for herself.

Poor Kate! If anybody had loved "Plebeian Pride," it had been his only daughter. In long-ago days she had been his pet and plaything—farther on, his hope and ambition; and though, later still, her will had been compelled to defeat his wish, those two had never relapsed into the deadly polite indifference which argues not only that love is dead, but that it never was anything but still-born. If there had been frequent storms in their atmosphere, there had been also sweet glints of sunshine. Many bitter words had been spoken, but kisses had still been given. They had differed on almost every point which ever arose between them, and they had always wrangled it out, generally to the old gentleman's discomfiture. But he remembered that his conqueror was his daughter, and was secretly rather proud to be defeated by her. She had never been undutiful: all the allegiance she could pay she had paid, and he had been conscious of her pitiful yearning that it could not be more. He had never liked her less for taking the part of her degraded mother, which she did without ever

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defending her. He had remembered his Kate's birthday only the week before, and had brought her home a lace shawl which a princess might have envied. That was not much, but it was much that the bauble was of a pattern which Kate had accidentally admired at an exhibition years before. He had remembered that.

And because of her great love, Kate was calm and quiet in the day of her anguish. She sent off for nurses. She would not imperil her father's life by attempting to monopolize a duty for which her strength or skill might be inadequate. And then, when all was done that could be done for the time, she sent everybody away, and shut herself in with the unconscious form, in the shaded bedroom.

She sat down to watch; and she had not so sat very long, before her eye fell on one of those commonplace things which the course of life makes so terrible sometimes. It was only a little black bag which her father occasionally carried to and fro to business. He must have had it with him at Perford Station, and one of his bearers had brought it up heedlessly in his disengaged hand.

The sight of it carried Kate back to the

interests of ordinary days. She wondered whether there was anything which her father would like to be done. Mr. Pride had taken delight in his daughter's capacity for business, and had not left it quite in the rough. She had often helped him with his letters and accounts of private business, not fully understanding, perhaps—for women cannot pick up at their leisure what absorbs all men's working hours—but still intelligent and appreciative. This influence had not been unsalutary for the girl, for there were many virtues buttressing the otherwise unwieldy and heterogeneous fabric of Plebeian Pride's prosperity. His meanness, his selfishness, his unscrupulousness, would not have made him a rich man had he not also been punctual, reliable, and painstaking. These vices and virtues, marshalled apart, are alike to be found in almshouses; it is their judicious mixture which makes the millionaire. But Kate had only been attracted by what had affinity with her own enthusiastic nature. As a child, she had revelled in tales of chivalry and self-devotion, and, fortunately for her, just as her whole nature was in danger of turning sour under the alien conditions of real life in which

she found herself, the chance word of some great man had opened her eyes to the fact that chivalry is perennial, though commerce supplant the crusade, and the knightly charger give place to the stool and desk. “To swear to one’s own hurt, and change not,” was as rare and priceless a virtue in David’s time as it is to-day. Kate saw that the regularity, the unswerving certainty which her father maintained because it was the “interest of business,” was, in fact, the point at which human hands take up God’s faithful ways; and that men for whom unfailing suns rise and harvests ripen, should so order their own goings that they shall never fail those whose eyes may look towards their dealings for daily bread.

Kate sat and looked at the black bag. Her father was in the habit of writing many letters at home in the evening, for the big house did not hold that sort of domesticity which wins a man from unseasonable business. He had often brought home long lists of sums due to his agents over the country, and had then filled up cheques and sent them off with letters of directions and hints, for Plebeian Pride kept his cunning hand on

many matters of small detail which poorer men would have entrusted to deputies. Kate knew that certain dates governed the despatch of these cheques, and of sundry other such matters of business, but never having had any responsibility in connection therewith, she did not know what these dates were. She remembered with pride that once, when she was a chance customer in some country shop, she had seen a man come in to pay a bill, and had heard him remark that "he'd knowed he'd be up to his word, for he'd trusted to Mr. Pride's money, and that was always sure."

What if some should be looking for that money to-morrow, and it should fail, and they should speak bitter words and think hard thoughts of the helpless old man lying there? What if somebody had to suffer for relying on her father? What if some poor soul, struggling hard in the battle of life, should think that all was indeed over when even Mr. Pride himself failed him, and so should drop down defeated? Perhaps Kate was strung to too high a key in imagining such things, but imagination finds out secrets that otherwise men would never know. For when the stories of all lives are known, there will be

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found blood on the hands of many, who, when they see it, will cry, "Lord, when did we this thing?" and shall hear the terrible answer, "Because thou didst defraud thy neighbour, in that at his day thou didst not give him his hire, and he was poor and set his heart upon it, and cried unto the Lord, and thus is this sin upon thee."

Kate sat and looked again at her unconscious father. Why should not the modern woman feel as much bound to carry through promises, and to regard the things of others in her dark days, as felt the lady of old to prolong the defence of the castle, and to uphold the rightful standard, even though her knight had fallen before her eyes? Hearts and nerves may break. After all, they are made to break. They are not of immortal texture. Nay, they *must* break, before they can let out that immortality which shall bear all that is gracious of their semblance without the deadly taint of decay.

These thoughts did not thus form in Kate's mind. Our noblest thoughts, when they come with personal prompting, seldom form, but float in a suggestive mistiness, like sunset glories. Their brightness is not their own.

But Kate rose, and brought the little black bag to the table which stood behind the curtains of the bed.

She brought also an inkstand and a pen. Her plan was soon definite enough. She had a banking account of her own, large enough to cover any sums she was likely to find were required. She would write cheques in her own name. Nobody should suffer, not even for an instant, in her father's misfortune. When his senses should return, nothing could do him so much good as to be told that "Everything was going on perfectly."

She opened the black bag, and took from it a folded sheet of draft-paper, which she opened. She saw at once that it was a will. The name of the testator was left in blank, and she was just about to refold it as something quite beyond her understanding or helpfulness, when her eye was caught by her mother's maiden name—Mary Anne Blanchet—written in full, and followed by the words "generally known as Mrs."—another blank. With that sort of wild half comprehension which we have all known when we have come suddenly upon some entirely new idea of life and its surroundings, Kate glanced along

the following lines, and found reference to two other legatees described as “John and Katherine Blanchet, otherwise known as John and Katherine”—again a blank.

Kate dropped the paper on her knee. Her father had always said she was a quick-witted lass, and she soon understood the terrible manuscript. Kate Pride, with her dainty dresses and her expensive governesses, her ponies and her grand pianos, had been present at many a bitter and humiliating scene, which had not ill prepared her for this shock. She had heard hard words spoken and bitter taunts thrown out, which she had pondered over carefully in the dawning lights of womanhood. She had long since come to the conclusion that no innocent and happy courtship had begun the wedded life which had dragged on so dismally. She loved both her parents—the dry, hard old father, whom most feared or hated, and the poor degraded mother, whom everybody openly despised ; and she had never cared to argue with herself with whom lay the balance of the blame. She knew the outward circumstances of the case—how the prosperous shopkeeper’s son had married his father’s wholly illiterate servant-maid, and

ad kept his marriage secret for a while. She ad heard her mother, when "not herself," aunt her husband with that secrecy, and its motives, and its end. No anniversary of a wedding-day had ever been kept in that family. Kate had formed many sorrowful conclusions from these data, but not until now had she reamed that there had never yet been a wedding-day—that her mother was no wife, and that she and her brother were nameless.

Half stupefied, she looked again at the terrible paper, and learned another awful truth. There was a lawful wife, and a lawful child, older by some years than either her brother or herself; and she at once comprehended other wild words of her mother's, which had hitherto floated by her so vague and so mysterious that she had thought of them only as wild words—mere exhalations of passion, mingling with the noisome fumes of ancient sin and misery.

And this was but a draft will, partly filled up and unsigned. And there lay her father in the deadly trance, from which he seemed little likely to be roused in this life. His daughter crept to his bedside and kissed the unresponsive

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lips ! Oh, poor father ! at least it had been his wish to provide for the offspring of the sin which had turned the overflowing cup of his prosperity to bitter poison.

She sat down again—white and cold—the noble lines of her beautiful face settling, as it were, into marble. And then once more she took up the black bag, and there, as she had half expected, she found the list of small creditors and the cheque-book.

It might be, that if her father never woke again on earth, she had no right to the room she was in, nor the chair she sat on ; it might be that they would be all penniless beggars—she and that helpless mother, and useless, expensive, dandy Jack. But she looked back at the white still figure on the bed. Had her father nothing else to carry with him into the unknown but his stolid minor virtues, his order, his punctuality, and his reliability ? Then, they at least should never fail while the poor breath was drawn. And Kate began to sign away cheque after cheque on that private account which her father had kept so bountifully supplied, that his darling might never want for fal-de-rals. This might be the last of those duties towards which the loyal,

daughterly heart had always yearned. Come what might, she would do it.

The doctors looked strangely at her when they entered, and marked her employment. That miserable will she had effectually thrust from sight in the bosom of her dress. She rose to do their bidding with the calm efficiency of an unscattered mind. They had brought two nurses. She received and installed them. Then she went back to her task, and by post-time all the letters were off on their way to green and pleasant country places. Nobody would look in vain for "Mr. Pride's money."

Mr. Pride died that night. He never woke again! His hand stirred once, and his daughter slipped hers within it, and liked to believe it had been sought. He was dead before the telegram, winging over sea and land, announced his danger to his son, seated at mess among his brother officers.

Eager sympathisers thronged the great house that night. Kate could have found a volunteer for every conceivable and inconceivable service. They were inclined to resent her own helpfulness and collectedness. These are unnecessary virtues in the rich, who are ex-

pected to lay themselves under bonds of gratitude never again to be discharged. But K gave her orders herself. She refused to see m of those who earnestly pressed sympathy a succour on her ; but she sent for two, in whose hearts she knew she had been tenderly bo through those bitter hours, though they h stood aloof, scarcely knowing what would kind and what merely intrusive. Those t were Miss Barbara Pendlebury and poor Ly Calderwood.

She took Lydia to her mother. "Here somebody who will try to comfort you, n ther," she said tenderly. "It is somebo who has been very, very sorry herself, a knows how it feels." And she led Miss Pendlebury to her own room, and showed her t will.

And next day it was "out all over C stead," as Mrs. Pendlebury elegantly pressed it, that for the last week there h been resident in Perford a middle-ag German woman and a young German, w claimed to be the lawful wife and t legitimate offspring of the dead millionai "Plebeian Pride."

And Mrs. Pendlebury "thanked goodness

that she had never encouraged "that saucy Kate's flirtations with dear Gilbert;" and Emma Pendlebury prudently forgot that she had ever woven a secret romance about Captain Jack.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE LAST OF THE BIG HOUSE.

**F**HE whole neighbourhood soon knew all there was to be known. The outlines of the story were bald and bare enough, though Kate well knew what secrets of shame and agony unendurable, were written between the lines. In the days of his early manhood, Mr. Pride, for some business object, had made a stay in Germany. There he had, in a moment of youthful delusion, married a low foreign actress, a woman of evil repute and violent temper. From the first, he had known that such an alliance would be entirely unacceptable in his decent Perford home. But it was just at that time that he was beginning to long for something greater and grander than the old quiet respectability. However, it was not long before this marriage was equally

unacceptable to himself. He parted from his wife when he knew he was soon to be a father, not even waiting to welcome his child. The wife did not regret his going: his own fierce temper and stiff English ways had made him a terror to her, and he settled on her a yearly allowance, to be paid through a German lawyer, which seemed wealth in her eyes. From that time, she had pursued her own devices, unmolested and unmolesting; nor would she have ever disturbed him again, save that her son, advanced and started in business for himself, was suddenly brought to a realisation of the wealth of his father, and therefore of the position which was rightfully his own. From that day he gave his mother no rest until she consented to accompany him to Perford and sustain him in his claims. Their arrival, and these claims, had been the origin of the unfinished will which Kate had found.

The dead man could not explain his own actions. But with Kate's mother's incoherent explanations their clue seemed simple enough. Returning home from his unhappy secret marriage with the foreign vixen, he had presently fallen in love with the pretty face and artless manners of his mother's servant, Mary

Anne Blanchet. Having touched her heart, and overcome her weak scruples by his sad story; he had at first intended to keep all connection with her a profound secret, but his father's suspicions having been somehow aroused, he had introduced her as his wife, knowing that would be best way to mitigate the wrath of the honest old man. Then he had allowed things to drift. Probably he had hoped that death might free him from his neglected foreign wife and her unknown son. Every year, as his importance drew more eyes upon him and about him, the difficulty of his position had increased. Jack and Kate were born, and then he knew that however soon he became a widower, no subsequent marriage could legitimatise his children in England. He grew to hate and scorn weak, harmless Mary Anne Blanchet. And hate and scorn wrought her into a condition more and more worthy of contempt. Conscious of the disreputable skeleton in his household, he grew more frantic in his grasp at phantom dignity and honour. And thus things were going on, when the old sin started into new life in the visible presence of the German woman and her son.

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It appeared that he had had his hopes of buying them off ; but that when he found them such a tangible reality, and that the young man especially was so well aware of the power he had in his hands, he had made up his mind that at all hazards he must secure his other children from falling into their mercy. The old man had travelled to a distant town and given instructions for his will to a strange solicitor. So fearful of any mistake had he been, that he had given all particulars of all parties concerned except himself. He had paid this solicitor his fees, and had not been expected to return again to the office. He would have copied the will himself, and taken every precaution as to its signing and witnessing.

And Kate, in all her grief, rejoiced in this. She would not be a whit richer in purse for the will which her father's sudden death had made abortive. But he had left her the priceless gift of loving and just consideration. He had been striving to do what he could to set right the wrong he had done. Somehow, she felt a pitiful yearning to think of the days when there had been hot youthful errors and terrors for him who had of late seemed but a hard old man, who made money-making his

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one object, and knew how to pursue it. Under all his apparent outward success he had played the real game of life, and had lost it, and perhaps this was the secret of much of his mercenariness and astuteness. She went into the quiet, white-draped bedroom, where he lay in his closed coffin, covered with masses of white flowers, sent by wealthy neighbours, and she put her hand on the cold, hard coffin lid, as though she would have grasped the still hand within, and her heart cried within her that here lay an unsuccessful and defeated man—a man who had made nothing out of this life which his spirit could carry to another, except perhaps her own love for him. “And O God,” she moaned, “my love for him must lie within Thy love for him. O God, our Father, I can trust him with Thee !”

Plebeian Pride had an almost public funeral. He was a man whose life had laid mainly outside household ties, so that their ruin did not seem to touch his memory as it might have touched that of most men. A long line of carriages, bearing his business connections and his dependants, followed his body to the grave. His son Jack was not there. It might have

been difficult for him to reach England in time under any circumstances. As it was, hard on the telegram which announced his father's death, had followed another announcing the general position of affairs. Therefore Jack was to land in England the day after the burial, and the only family connection who assisted in the last duties of the millionaire's funeral was the foreign son, whom he had never seen until he had entered his presence with demands for justice and threats of exposure.

Kate professed no violent antipathy to the woman and the youth who thus supplanted her mother and herself. "Frau Pride" had never been what she should have been, but in her relations with John Pride she had been certainly not the wronger, but the wronged. Her son might be, as he was, but a coarse and greedy German, but he had been certainly deeply injured. Kate did not ignore that their wrongs had been cruel because she loved the hands which had inflicted them. Had the story been revealed during her father's lifetime she would have spoken stern truths to him. And she would not smear his memory by any falsehoods now. Like all passionately-loving natures, hers had a passion for simple right.

She delighted to believe that this was the reflection, on her somewhat different organization, of her father's own just and righteous dealings, though in his case it had been sadly limited to matters of £ s. d.

She did not shrink from meeting her unknown half-brother. She would not have shrunk from meeting his mother, but the woman shrunk from her. The young man was strangely abashed by the words and ways of the elegant and lovely English lady, who faced her new humiliation, and made it a badge of honour by her voluntary and unflinching acceptance of it. This awed him far more than the grand house, and the visible presence of boundless wealth. He did not know how to meet Kate's petitions for old servants, and favourite trees, her explanation as to particular personal wishes of her father's, which she told him she was sure he need only know to consider. Kate's manner made him almost doubt the legality of his mother's claim. Mr. Pride had admitted it; his lawyers were now sifting it with a deference of manner which anybody could understand; but Kate's tranquil abnegation of all made him feel as if she knew he was standing on a mine which she could explode if

and when she chose. He entreated her deprecatingly, not to think of hurrying from the house.

Kate assured him that her plans were all made. She and her mother would leave the house the very day after the funeral. They would go to the seaport town where Jack would presently land. He need be under no concern for them.

“Of course, I shall see that you receive some allowance,” he began in his broken English.

Kate thanked him quite heartily. But it must not be so, she assured him. She and her mother had each other, and they both had Jack. They would thrive somehow. And when he would have reiterated his offer, with a surly good-feeling which touched her by a pathetic resemblance to her father, she routed him entirely out of the house by going up to him, and holding out her hand while she said, “Should we come to any misfortune, I will beg first from you.”

Kate’s heart was high and her courage buoyant. Though her private banking account had been nearly exhausted by the cheques she had written on the night of her

father's death, she had still at much money ~~as~~ would keep her and her mother quietly ~~for~~ some weeks, to say nothing of what more ~~might~~ be realised by the sale of jewellery and sundry small personal effects, which Kate felt she ~~was~~ little likely to need again. Kate knew that she had valuable accomplishments which might be used either in work or in teaching. Her accomplishments had not been the mere gewgaws ~~as~~ which accomplishments so frequently are. Her father's constant sense of a money value ~~had~~ had impressed itself on his daughter in the form of making her dissatisfied with any possibly saleable performance, unless it reached a really saleable standard. She had compared her sketches, not with those of young lady friends, but with those seen in shops and galleries. She had hopes for herself in this respect. Her music and her knowledge of languages reached an excellence which would have easily obtained for her a good appointment as a governess; but as she was quite determined to remain entirely with her mother, these need not be considered. She was sure she could be a riding mistress. Even Miss Pendlebury looked up in some amaze when Kate volunteered this suggestion.

“Why, not?” she said. “I learned riding myself, and what decent and educated women may learn, decent and educated women may surely teach.” And Miss Pendlebury frankly owned that she had fallen into the error of a conventional idea.

Kate laid these plans even before the funeral. All life would give her leisure for grief, while the opportunity for action was fleeting, and must be caught on the wing.

She went through all her own and the family’s personal possessions with a steady persistency, sitting up far into the night that her task might be thoroughly done. Whether or not the new master and his mother were people whose feelings were likely to suffer at the sight of traces of the vanished family, she did not ask. It remained her duty to see that they found none, and that they should enter into possession without finding any reminder that their places and their property had been long usurped by others.

Of these personal possessions she gave generously, right and left, remembering any details of the servants’ families, which might render certain gifts particularly acceptable.

There were no old servants in the Prides' house. They were the ordinary set of hirelings. But Kate did her duty by them all, in a way which, if often done, would make the possession of faithful servants a greater probability of life than it is now. And they wept, and made up their minds "to give notice" as soon as she was gone.

She and her mother took their departure late on the day following the funeral. They waited until the shades of the short winter afternoon had fallen. At the very last, Kate shook hands with all the servants, and sent messages to one or two of the kindlier neighbours. Lydia Calderwood, very pale and cold, brought down Jack Pride's mother. Kate and Lydia took leave of each other on the door-step, and Lydia was dressed in readiness for her walk home to Mrs. Moffat's. As Kate entered the carriage, she turned and took one look at the great house, now so dark and silent. Then she seated herself beside her mother and grasped her hand, while she heard her murmur, "Anywhere, anywhere, so that I am at peace for a little while before I die."

Their train started from Perford, and on the dismal little platform they found Miss Pendle-

\*bury and Lois Enticknapp, waiting to see them off. Lois got their tickets, obeying, without any remark, Kate's instructions that they should be second-class, and Kate's last words, as the train whirled off, were to commit Lydia once more to the care of her first friend in Perford.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### CHANGES.

**O**NCE more Lois and Lydia were left to resume their quiet walks and talks. But if Lois had found things changed since the evening when Lydia had first met Mrs. Pride, she found them doubly changed now. Lydia was, at last, able to stand firmly in her lot in life without the upholding of any earthly friend. Not as a sacred charge must Lois now receive her, but as an equal friend. And gladly did Lois feel this, and joyfully did she regard Lydia with the tender reverence due to one who has not been foiled in life's worst battle, even when it went the hardest. Indeed she felt almost pained by Lydia's awful humility. For Lois' own loving heart had learned from God's heart of love how to put sin apart from the sinner as far as the east is from the west, and she could scarcely realise that it was

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not quite meet that Lydia should do likewise ; at least, not yet.

But these walks and talks had only gone on for a few days, when Lydia brought Lois a letter in Kate Pride's handwriting, and bade her read it. It was not very long, and Lois read.

“MY DEAR LYDIA,—

“Jack is with us here. All has been a terrible blow to him, as you may suppose. He landed very ill, and I think his symptoms should have alarmed us sooner, but that I attributed them at first to weariness and distress. However, they plainly grew more serious. He is now scarcely conscious, and the doctor says he is suffering from some fever of a malignant type, and that his condition is absolutely dangerous.

“I shall have to seek some assistance, for my mother is terribly nervous among strangers and under this new sorrow. Let me hear from you very soon, dear Lydia. I ask you nothing ; I would not put out my hand to beckon you or to hold you off ; but what you feel God puts into your heart, that do, and believe me always—

“Your Friend,

“KATE.”

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“Lois,” said Lydia, in a voice which sounded strange to her friend, “I shall go to him.”

“Kate wishes you to go,” answered Lois.

“I am going now—at once,” Lydia went on. “I have a change of linen in my bag. I have told Mrs. Moffat not to expect me home. Do not come with me to the station. Let me go alone.”

“Lydia, Lydia!” cried Lois, “do not look so terribly calm and stern. Look at me as if you loved me, Lydia.”

“As if I loved you!” echoed Lydia. “O Lois!” She put her arms about her friend’s neck, and suddenly her head dropped on Lois’s shoulder and she sobbed.

“O, if I might see him but once again, and we might speak kindly to each other; and then that I might die!”

Lois did not answer. There are wails of despair that none but God can answer. And Lois felt that this was a wail of despair, different as it might be from Lydia’s despair of by-gone days. It was the cry of the poor wrecked-life—the rending of the little boat which could never again dance in sheer delight on the summer seas of time. Lois’ own woman’s heart sympathised with Lydia. She

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felt that if God gave her a choice for her friend, she would ask not length of days, but an early grave. But God kept the future with Himself, and as she could say nothing, she only kissed Lydia's cold cheek, and let her depart.

And so Lydia Calderwood left Perford, lonely as she had entered it. She found a railway carriage which she could have to herself, and she stretched her head from its window and watched the town's tall chimneys and overhanging smoke until they passed from sight. In her heart, she hoped she would never see them more. Then she sat down, and never stirred, nor looked from the window again, though her journey took two hours, and though it was still early afternoon when the train slackened its speed, and she had arrived at the end of her journey.

Kate received her kindly and gladly, but without any demonstration, and led her to the sick-room, which she did not again leave, except for short snatches of sleep, for a whole month.

Nobody but Kate ever knew anything of the secrets of those days, and in aftertimes Kate told little. There was dull insensibility, and there was wild delirium; there were

secrets revealed—some pitiful, some terrible; there were wild words of hatred, and wilder words of love; there was mocking blasphemy; there was bitter defiance of the new degradation which had settled like a nightmare on the sick man's fevered brain. Kate had loved her brother, but there were seasons in those days when she shrank from him—yet Lydia never wavered. Her soothing touch and her gentle voice were always ready. And when reason dawned again, it was on her face, pale and sweet, but with that sternness which comes of terrible endurance, that Jack Pride's first conscious gaze rested.

“Then I am dead!” he cried in terror.

“No, Jack, no,” she said softly; “we are both together once more on earth that we may forgive each other.”

That was the key to which she set all their intercourse. They had to forgive each other.

And so it came to pass that Jack Pride, nameless and penniless, offered his empty hand to the woman whom he had wronged, and she promised to take it. And at the very moment when she thus attained what had once seemed to her to be the very height

of happiness, she went away by herself and wept bitterly.

For, if the old sin which had linked them together could have been swept away, and she could have been set once more free, in the barest and hardest lot, she would not now have fallen in love with Jack Pride. Her eyes had opened to an ideal of nature and of life which he could never satisfy. But Jack had asked her to marry him, and out of the old sin there arose, at least, the duty of allowing him to make what reparation he could, and of giving him that ease and honesty of conscience on which he might the better mount to higher things. She had no right to hope for any duty in life, if she shrank from this duty thus presented to her. And then Lydia remembered how she had felt, when she had first discovered that the handsome young officer noticed the poor little nursery governess. And she seemed to see again the old sunshine of that spring, and to smell once more the sweet breath of its hyacinths. And she lifted up her voice and wept bitterly.

And so it was planned that they should be married in the early spring. Jack Pride had

resigned his commission, and as soon as his health was fairly re-established, he would require to return to Perford for a few days, to settle up some family affairs ; and it was proposed that Lydia should join him there, and that they should be married quietly in the old parish church where Plebeian Pride's honest grandfathers had worshipped.

And while the slow days of convalescence wore away in the sea-port town, life went forward rather briskly at Perford. While Lydia sat with Jack, and patiently read such books as he liked, and tried to keep up her share in what Jack Pride deemed conversation, and to lead him gently into such tender human sympathies and true ways of thought as might best fit him for returning to the stern life which now lay before the frivolous dandy, Miss Pendlebury, in her House by the Works, was actively putting into operation many schemes which had long worked in her kindly brain.

She had rented a great old house just outside the town. It had many rooms, and each of them was destined to shelter a poor old man or woman, or indeed an old couple. They were to pay no rent, and to be provided

with an allowance of coal and candle. Poor old Dan Chambers was the first inmate, the guardians having consented, under the circumstances, to continue his out-door relief. He was not even doomed to part from his dog, though he was spared providing for it any more, since it was accepted as the "house dog," though it was far too meek and mild to be any terror to evil-doers. The other rooms did not long remain empty. Miss Pendlebury herself retained the sole right of electing her pensioners, feeling assured that nothing but individual kindness can secure real justice or wholesome influence. Destitution by itself was not the strongest claim she admitted. Parents of children struggling only too hard to provide for them, did not find themselves pushed aside for those who had reared drunkards and idlers, who could not and would not help them. Those who can secure something for themselves are best entitled to find a little comfort added by a friendly hand. A sailor son, who had saved his wages to keep his poor bed-ridden mother in a neglected, lonely home, now devoted them to maintaining her, a brightened cheery old lady, in Miss Pendle-

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bury's Home, and he could cheerfully go on his voyages assured that no rough storm might cast her on the world an utterly unfriended old woman. Good Mrs. Moffat, known to the Enticknapps for years of honest work, was now called from the exigencies of chance charing to give all her time to cleaning the old people's rooms, cooking their food, and nursing them in sickness.

"An' this I will say," observed the worthy woman, "that it's gey and dowie they are when they first come in. It's weel eneuch for the first day, but on the morrow they pech and pine, and say there's nae mair atween them and the grave. Wonnering whaur they'll find their bread or whan they'll get their bed made, has been a kind o' ploy for them, and they miss it whiles. But I set them up. I don't just keep everything as if God ruled aff the hoors wi' red ink. An' I mak' 'em luik efter each ither. Whan there's mony fowk thegither, he maun be sair dune that can serve nae man. Auld Dan is deaf, an' he has to thread the needles for Widow Macraw, an' she darns his stockings for him ; an' poor Sam Piper, who's a little weak in the heid, taks up water for ilka bodie. An'

things, tae, that are nae use to aebody come in fine in a hoose. Widow Macraw had a heap o' kitchen things, and puir auld Dan had only a kettle wi' the sproot broken, but auld Dan had a snug chair he ne'er used, whilk just fitted the widow's sair back. Eh, but we're canty fowk, a' thegither, an' we've found oot ane ambition we canna gie up but wi' life itsel', and that's to be the auldest residentiar, and to get the big front parlour wi' the heids o' the heathen gods carved on the mantelpiece."

Will Summers, too, had got work. Miss Pendlebury's strong personal recommendation had secured him a post as timekeeper at some great engineering works, not very far out of the town. His little household might be considered quite prosperous. Their lodger was still with them, at a slightly increased rental, as he had brought a younger brother to stay with him. Mrs. Summers continued to serve Miss Pendlebury as fine laundress and needlewoman, and always as the reliable household friend whose faithful services could be secured in any emergency. Her health, too, had never relapsed into its former fragility. Her husband's family had not

liked her, and the poor little sensitive woman had pined under this. But when she found herself, in very deed, Will Summers' right-hand, she developed energies which soon gave her as much happy self-assertion as is needed to repel adverse influences. Miss Pendlebury's kindness and attention, too, the store which that lady set on those little virtues of hers which the coarser women of her own rank had only ridiculed, all added to the self-reliance and self-respect which are really necessary to healthfulness.

Also a little party of emigrants was soon to leave Perford. They were not to go in the loneliness which makes expatriation so terrible to anybody, and especially to the ignorant and inexperienced. The party was to be made up of some single men and women, a few married pairs, and three or four young men of a higher rank, who would keep up the spirit of the others. This had been Aunt Barbara's idea; and she had given her utmost energy and influence to its successful working out.

Miss Pendlebury had also carried out her idea of the social meetings for the women and girls employed at the Works. She had found

that it would be worse than useless to try and interest her nieces in the matter, and Kate Pride had, from necessity, failed her. Therefore she and Lois Enticknapp had together done their best. And the girls with whom they made friends would certainly have declared, "that if anybody else had meddled, all must have been spoiled."

They met in the low, long chamber in the House by the Works, which had been the dining-room of Barbara Pendlebury's girlhood. They had tea, not in thick hired cups, but in the prettiest china the house could furnish. Then Miss Pendlebury would play and sing a little, and Lois Enticknapp brought out her needlework, her own genuine needlework, those delightful white things which she always wore about her neck. Then Miss Pendlebury read aloud a little. Next time many of the girls brought needlework. One or two asked Lois for patterns. Then regular reading aloud was started, and interesting books were chosen, such as would give rise to lively discussions about all sorts of matters—courtships, savings, domestic economy, dress, friendship, and the like. One girl was discovered who sang beautifully, another with such a decided taste for

drawing that Aunt Barbara herself took her to the evening classes of the Art School at Culstead, of whose cheapness and accessibility the poor thing herself had never even dreamed.

Once a week, too, in the "Old Folks' Home," as Aunt Barbara called the house in Mrs. Moffat's charge, there was a little religious service, open not only to the inmates, but to anybody who liked to come. Everything was simple enough ; there were no long prayers, no reading of dry, tract-like sermons, only the "Our Father," with addition of a few such homely phrases as might make it even more special to the lowly worshippers—only a short soothing chapter from the Bible, and a talk over its truths, which talk was allowed to wander into those retrospective paths which old and suffering people love. And then Lois would sing one of her beautiful hymns, whose harmony the angels would not love the less because it so uplifted the poor old weary hearts, that before its close some cracked voices were sure to chime into the tune, even if the words were unfamiliar.

But now Miss Pendlebury herself and all her pensioners and friends were beginning to

ask what they should do when Lois was gone. For Hans Endberg was to wait no longer. In that spring three pairs were to be joined in holy wedlock : to wit, Fanny Pendlebury and Dr. Weston, Jack Pride and Lydia Calderwood, and a very little later on, Hans and Lois. The first wedding was the topic of Culstead drawing-rooms. Of the second nobody spoke, except when Miss Pendlebury or Lois, or her mother, made some quiet remarks to each other. The third was talked over and blessed in many a humble house in Perford. Lois went about, with a light as from heaven itself shining on her fair face. There was no shadow on her happiness. Hans was to come and take her away, and her mother was to follow so soon that there would be no pang of parting. Even the old house would not be disturbed—staid Paul, honest Else, and plump Floss would still pursue the even tenor of their ways. And Lois could look forward to the rare pleasure of coming back in future, and perhaps showing her own children the Greenland boat and the brass coffee-pot, and all the other household gods, still standing in their old places.

*She only wished that everybody in the world*

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was as happy as she was ; and she felt as if she would not have dared to enjoy her bliss, if she had not had a sure and certain hope that some day, somewhere, everybody would be even far happier.

Her simple wedding gifts were beginning to come in, though the date of Hans Endberg's coming was still a few weeks off, when one day Else Beck came to Lois's bedroom, and entered with a peculiar air of secrecy, closing the door behind her with elaborate attention.

“ I've got a present for you,” she said, holding out her hard brown hands. But they were empty, and Lois laughed in amazement.

“ Ay, but it's in my mouth,” said the good woman ; “ it's a bit o' news that will please you. Did you mind, Lois, that you once asked me how it was that Paul Stach and I had never got married ?”

In her maiden consciousness, Lois blushed at the recollection of the blunt childish question, and acknowledged it.

“ Well,” narrated Else, “ Paul came into the kitchen this morning, and sat there a whole half-hour without ever speaking one word—not that he is ever an active man with his

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tongue—and at last he said, ‘Elsie, if the Apostle Paul were living in England to-day, do you think he could call these “times of present distress?”’ And I said I couldn’t be evened to know the likes o’ that, but that in my mind all times are much of a muchness ; and then he said, extra slow and solemn, ‘It’s been borne in on me lately, that God may not mean us to avoid the cares and troubles of this life as they do who avoid marriage ; and, therefore, Elsie Beck, if it is likewise borne in upon you, let us cast in our lots together, and spend the evening of life in company.’”

“And what did you say, Else?” asked Lois radiantly.

“I said, ‘Paul Stach, no cross, no crown ; and so, to save a decent man like you from missing that last, I’ll undertake to be the first myself.’ An’ he asked the blessing of God upon us, before I had time to put down my dish-clout.”





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A MEMORABLE DAY.

**T**It came to pass that the weddings of Fanny Pendlebury and Lydia Calderwood fell on the same day.

Fanny was married at the fashionable church at Culstead. Her splendid gifts were on show at her father's house for a day or two, and she and the bridegroom had a very sharp quarrel on the evening before the wedding. However, with the exception of that very unimportant circumstance, every thing was exactly as it should be. There was no individual taste exerted about anything. Confectioners told what should be done in their line of business, and milliners and dressmakers were equally peremptory in theirs. There was the largest possible number of bridesmaids. The church was thronged; the wedding break-

fast was crowded. Speech-makers who did not know the bride praised her for virtues as to which nobody but intimates could have any chance of judging ; and other speech-makers who did know the bridegroom praised him for qualities they knew he did not possess. Emma went into hysterics over the loss of her beloved sister, and Gilbert drank more champagne than he should. Mrs. Pendlebury was triumphant and excited. Mr. Pendlebury was serious and almost sad, while Aunt Barbara and Peter seemed to stand somewhat apart. To Aunt Barbara this wedding was infinitely sadder than her father's funeral. The good old maid had had a romance of her own, and so kept a tender corner in her heart for all romance, and she felt a terrible pang for those who put from their lives as nothing that which is to all life as the sun is to the earth.

The stable-men and servant-maids of Culstead called it "a proper wedding," and the guests went home discussing shortcomings they had happened to observe, and determining to do far grander things when such ceremonies should come off in their own families. And the bride and bridegroom rattled off to Paris.

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Quite as sad, though in a far different way, was the marriage which was celebrated in shadowy old Perford Church at the very same hour. The night before this wedding Lydia Calderwood had slept with Lois Enticknapp, and nobody would have noticed anything especial about the two girls as they walked quietly through the streets to the church. They were in ordinary garb. If Lydia's grey dress was a little paler and finer than the garments she had worn hitherto, that was due to Lois's tender consideration.

Jack Pride met them in the porch. There would be nobody present except those three. Nobody would give Lydia away. She wished nobody to be there except the one woman to whom she owed so much.

Jack knew what he also owed to the quiet Quaker girl, who looked up into his face with such sweet, earnest eyes. And Lois noticed how pitifully he watched Lydia, and waited on her every movement. It seemed as if Lydia was much older than him, or much wiser or much stronger. The frank, mutual love, the happy, wisely surrender was not for these. Lydia Calderwood had sounded the depths of Jack Pride's nature; she knew its selfishness,

its superficialness, its coarseness, even its cruelty. It was a sin which had joined them together, and now patience and duty must work upon and weld the ill-matched lives. If, in the day of Lydia's fall, she could have dreamed of this marriage, it would have seemed as if by it all shame and punishment would be abrogated. She knew better now. She knew the full truth—that truth which Lois would never deny, when she herself had passionately asserted it in hope of contradiction—to wit, that the past can never be undone, but that, for good or for evil, every item of it must live for ever in the future.

The clergyman looked at the pair with a good-humoured, indifferent interest. He knew the story of the Pride family, and he knew Jack Pride by sight. Of Lydia he knew absolutely nothing.

The solemn words were spoken : the names were written in the vestry ; there was no congratulating voice ; only Lois kissed the bride and shook hands with Jack. She guided them from the church by another door, which led them past the tablet of the faithful servant, which she pointed out to them. They were to return with her to her mother's

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house, and to join the family dinner-table before they went away. It would be Lydia's last meal in the home which had so hospitably welcomed her; for she and her husband were to start for New Zealand in less than a week. They were going out in a poor enough way, as intermediate passengers, with but such scanty outfits as narrow means and short time had permitted them to provide.

They went once more over the old home which Lydia had learned to love. They showed Jack the simple treasures in the quaint best room, and he thought he successfully made believe to be interested in them, but did not deceive either Hannah Enticknapp or Lois, though they in their turn made believe to be deceived.

Lois would not let that parting meal be sad, but kept up her pleasant chatter, though there was little response except from her mother. Kate Pride had sent a letter which was to be given to the young couple on their return from the church, conveying her own and her mother's best wishes, and giving plenty of bright gossip about her new home and her prospects. For the cloud of adversity was breaking for Kate Pride, as it is always

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apt to break for those who walk bravely into it. Even Else Beck tried to contribute a quota of merriment, not sparing sly allusions to her own intention of shortly daring “the cares and troubles of life.”

Little did they dream what was coming to them—borne already by rapid feet down Perford streets. Lois could not help thinking of the other wedding party which would soon gather in that room. Rather, she did not think of the wedding party; she only saw Hans Endberg’s kind face beaming from the seat now filled by Jack Pride. Probably at this very minute—as it was the middle of the day, and he would have left his classes—he was looking over the pretty home he was preparing, and perhaps planning some pleasant surprise for her. What it might be, did not matter; Hans planning it was the beautiful thing—the thought which made her face shine as if Paradise were opening to her view.

A foreign telegram was handed in by Paul Stach. And there was one moment of wild suspense, which seemed like a year, while Hannah Enticknapp felt her heart stand still, and then felt sure Hans had only sent word that he was coming sooner than had been expected.

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Women like Lois Enticknapp do not faint nor shriek when the hand of Heaven strikes them. Lois only stood up, put the paper on the table, and said, "It is over; Hans is with God," and turned away.

They could know no more for some hours later. And then they knew all that was ever known, and that was little enough. Hans was in the habit of taking a quiet evening walk in the fields. One night he never came home, and when search was made he was found lying on his accustomed path, shot through the heart.

His murderer was never found. It appeared that the wretches whom he had denounced for Gilbert Pendlebury's sake, had again put in an appearance in the town a day or two before, and had been summarily warned off by the police, this time without any intervention of his. It was imagined that they had suspected his interference, and that his death was due to their revenge. Some of the party were found, but though there were suspicious circumstances, nothing could be distinctly proved against them. And one of the men could never again be traced.

All this came out afterwards. Meanwhile

the blessed among women had become the utterly desolate.

Jack and Lydia did not hurry from the stricken house. Perhaps the first thing which roused Lois from her terrible trance was Lydia's arm about her neck, when the details of the tragedy came in.

"If I had never come near you this would not have happened," groaned Lydia. "I see the chain of circumstances which links my coming here with this great loss of yours. I have been your curse, Lois, as you have been my blessing."

"Darling," said Lois in a whisper, "it may not have happened thus. And if—if it is so, and I could have known the end from the beginning—I hope I should have done the same. I hope so. I'm not sure that I should."

"Mother and I must go and live in the house which Hans had got ready," she said presently; "and we shall know the people who knew him. It will be easier to live well there. This place is too full of my old dreams of happiness." And then she began to cry quietly.

"To fill ~~us~~ that which is behind of the

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afflictions of Christ,' " she murmured. " What does that mean? Can it be that the suffering of the least member of Christ's body,—of those whom Jesus called brothers and sisters,—is part of His great sacrifice? Jesus himself did not suffer every kind of suffering. He was a man; He could not suffer a woman's sufferings. But He taught us that our Father is with us in them all."

" Lydia," she said suddenly, another time, " we cannot tell the mysteries of the next life. But I think it must be very like this life, only a little higher. We say it is hardest to be left behind; but we never think that there may be some loneliness for those who go first. How different death will be to me, from what it must have been to my darling!"

" Oh, Lydia, Lydia!" she said again, as she lay on her bed in the darkness, while Lydia sat weeping by her side—" oh, Lydia, there is an awful hunger and thirst for a face one cannot see! To think that if I searched every corner of the wide world I could never find Hans! And oh, Lydia, while I have been rejoicing in my great happiness, other people have been suffering thus! Oh, Lydia, when I die, I pray God give me one look at Hans, and

then I shall never be able to rest again till the last sorrow is over, and the problems of life are no more puzzles to anybody, and the helpless crying of loving hearts is done!"

"And now, Lydia darling," she said, "you must take the things which I had made for myself. I was so sorry to see you leaving with so little, and now it needn't be. You will take them, won't you? You won't feel as if there was any misfortune linked with them. You must take them as a gift from Hans and me."

And so a day or two wore on, and then Lydia and her husband were fain to depart. Hannah Enticknapp and Lois would themselves leave England only a day or two later.

"We shall be at the port by the time your ship is going down the Channel, Lydia," said Lois. "I will look at the ships and know you are in one of them. You are going away, Lydia. You are going farther away than Hans, for you are going to the ends of the earth, whence a letter takes weeks to come, while he is only vanished into the unseen, which may be here, and whence, I believe, he can constantly send me thoughts of comfort

on which my soul unconsciously lives, as my body unconsciously breathes."

Lois did not weep very much, and she packed her own marriage gear in Lydia's trunks with her own hand, and she remembered things which everybody else forgot, and laid plans which nobody else dreamed of. She went with Jack and Lydia to the train, went with them alone, and returned alone through Perford streets, in her plain new mourning—for she did not keep the Quaker custom, though a stranger would have thought her simple dress rather that of a sister of mercy than the garb of death. People who knew her looked after her, as she passed them swiftly, with her bright, on-looking eyes. Some said she bore it bravely, and some that those religious folks had no feeling. But the doctor who stood at the hospital door, remarked to the old janitor—

"That girl's heart is broken. Whether she dies to-night (which would not surprise me) or whether she lives to be a hundred, which is quite possible, that girl's heart is broken."

"Well, sir," said the old attendant, "when

one thinks of Miss Lois, and of what is given her to bear, I doesn't wonder you says there be no God."

"That is precisely what gives me faith in God," answered the doctor. "I can't believe—none but a madman could—that all the beautiful organisms we know, come from a fiendish intelligence. And I can't help seeing a plan in life as well as in matter. And, therefore, as it does not seem so perfect as the other plan, I come to the conclusion this must be because we don't see it all yet; and I begin to think that when we do, we shall be satisfied."





## THE END.

**O**NCE more, the stretch of sea-shore. In the foreground the low sea wall skirts the gorse-clad height, on the top of which glimmer the white huts of the military encampment. In the front is the straggling village, whose red roofs only peer above the uneven ground. Farther off, stretches the shingle terraced by the waves, buttressed with great black piles, and backed by bare green hills. Farther still, the noble spire of an old church, rises from a town out of sight; and farther yet, looming but dimly between sea and sky, stretches a headland whose name is written on many a broken heart.

Lois Enticknapp is walking where Lydia Calderwood walked one little year ago.

She pauses and looks at the passing ships, with their sails white in the sunshine. Lydia is in one of them, and she sends prayers and

blessings after whichever it may be. Nay, let them go with every one. Are not God's children on them all?

"If I had seen the end from the beginning, should I have done the same?" she asks herself. "I cannot tell. I hope I should."

She stands quite still. And she thinks of "a green hill far away, outside a city wall," and of a Cross reared thereon. He who died there never taught that His Father's business was easy work to be cheaply done. Rather did He, by word and deed, reveal as the law of the spiritual universe, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

The spring breeze stirs her soft hair, and the spring sunshine envelops her in its glory; and as she stands gazing out across the sea, she catches a vision which her voice cannot utter, which her heart cannot contain, of the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. The vision does not linger. If it did, faith could not have its perfect work. It passes, and leaves the softer and nearer consolation of the sunshine and the breeze, and the rolling, restless sea. And Lois sits down beside the great black pile and

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weeps and weeps, where Lydia had wept one year ago. And no human voice rouses or cheers Lois. And yet presently Lois is roused and cheered. And she rises again, and looks once more across the sea towards the ships, ere she turns to go back to the town where she and her mother are waiting, till they can take their passage to the strange land where Lois must die daily till death calls her to Everlasting Life.

**THE END.**

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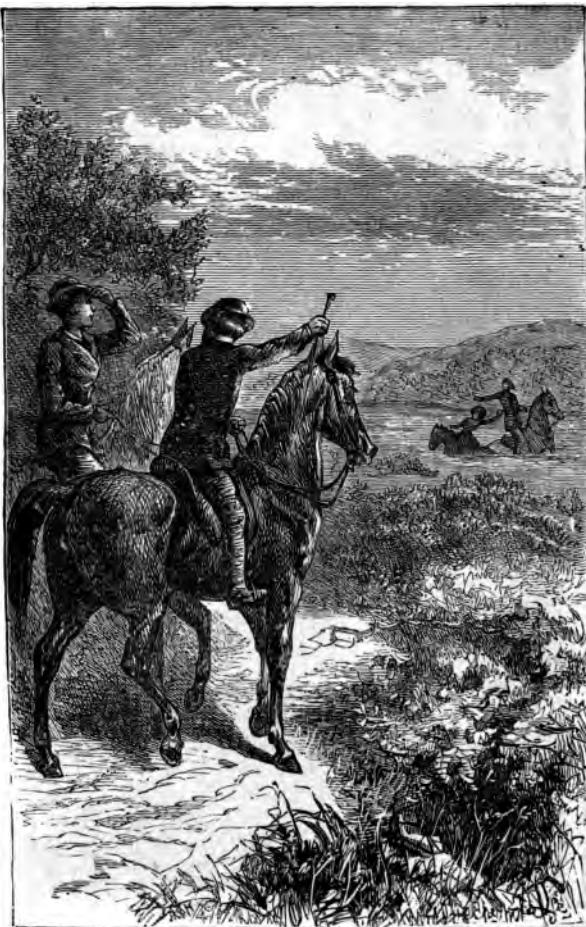
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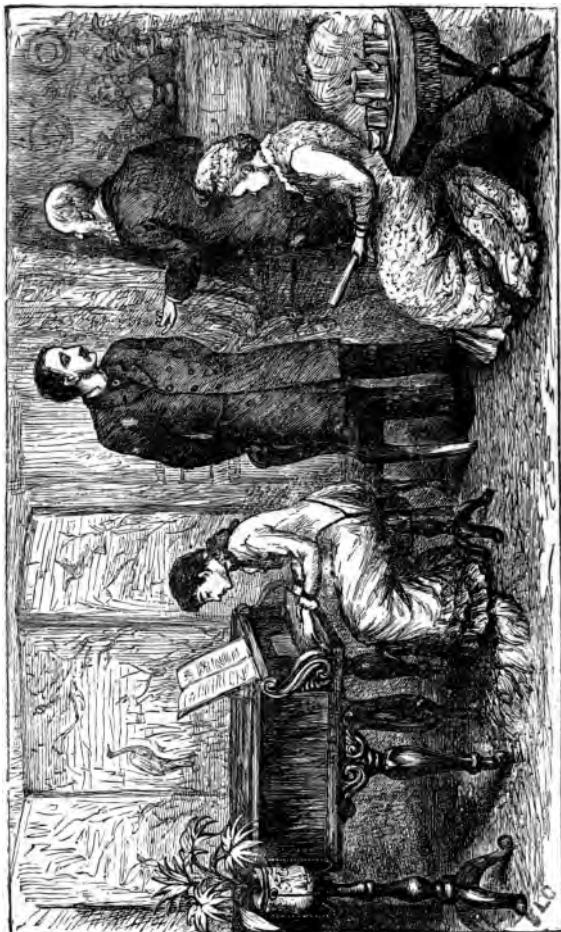
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